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# MEADOW SWEET

OR

THE WOOING OF IPHIS

*A PASTORAL*

BY

EDWIN WHELPTON

AUTHOR OF 'A LINCOLNSHIRE HEROINE' ETC.

'A daughter of our meadows, yet not coarse;  
Straight, but as lissom as a hazel wand'

TENNYSON

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1884

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223  
W. 57-2-77  
Vol 1

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New York City 29 Apr 53 Checked = 341  
2000 Circulation 21 May 12



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# MEADOW SWEET.



## CHAPTER 1.

### A HAYFIELD.

MOIST is the scent of the fallen meadow grass, the mower 'draws in his last breed,' and the heavy-headed grass-bents lie prostrate. A sigh of satisfaction and relief escapes the toiler as he takes up a handful of the wet grass and wipes the bright edge of his scythe. From four o'clock in the morning he has been swinging it, leading off with two men behind him, scarcely giving himself time to look round, for his reputation is dear to him. His two comrades have left him to finish out the corner, departing to other expanses, not exactly of bright green, but of dull red bronze.

‘A heavy swaithe,’ mutters the mower. His face is dark with freckles, with sunburn, dirt, and sweat. His brawny arms carry no superfluous flesh ; they are as freckled as his face, as sunburnt, and as dirty. His wife stands at his elbow—a comely woman if weather-worn, on her arm a basket, covered with a clean, white napkin. There is something substantial under for the inner man. In the hand of the other arm a huge stone jug pendent, yeasty at the nose.

‘Heigh!’ ejaculates she, commiseration and assent in the tone of her voice, also wifely love and consideration for her bread and bacon winner, ‘where wilt ee be?’

‘By the beck, Ninphia; ’tis cool there.’

They descend, until from where they stood one sees the man’s legs no longer, then only his head and shoulders continue visible ; his wife lost to view. They then emerge ; ascend again until they reach a bank sloping to a swift, running brook, which holds forth the attraction of a delicious coolness to the toiler.



As he casts himself down, a vapour of chill refreshing air seems to him to arise from the dark water. The willow-leaved dropwort grows luxuriantly within reach, the deep pink flower with the eye of crimson in a happy surprise of contrast to the retiring green of its foliage. Here and there a tuft of marsh marigold, the lavish flower yellow through. Black spiders dart in and out along the edges of the stream with the nonchalance of experienced skaters at their ease, avoiding the sunlight—fellows too wideawake to disport themselves elsewhere than in cool shadows. He does not fail to note that which lies about him ; he sees the tiny fish bolt and double in the shallows. After such toil his mind is open to regard Nature's smallest wonders. His heavy boots hang but a few inches from the water ; his wife has taken her place beside him, but a little above him, and he takes from her the gallon jug, and slowly but dexterously reverses its position. One 'sleeks' better out of jug or bottle than out of mug or glass. Silence is golden.

His wife above him hears nothing, but from her coign of vantage the steady flow is suggested to her by the rising of the apple in her husband's throat. There is some little tact in drinking from a bottle. It is a long time before the jug is withdrawn from his lips, and then breathlessly he gasps, 'Ah——m!'

Silently he takes from his wife's hands the extended food, for he has not yet sufficiently recovered himself to venture upon conversation. In her eyes the sympathy still continues, the work is hard and toilsome, the money is well and honourably earned.

Kindly though he is to her in look and gesture when it is impossible for him to convey to her his affectionate regard for her verbally, the mower's mind is rather soured. Of his two comrades, one has been disposed to act unfairly, and not do his share of the 'tek.' Himself and the other always found idle Jack far behind, requiring some help if all were to start fair again. He was senselessly idle, slow, or incapable.

But Farmer Cowlamb, on his white cob, coming up to view progress, soon observed the state of affairs. Farmer Cowlamb had an eagle eye, a quick brain, and a sardonic mind.

‘Put him in’t middle, lads ; he’ll move then, a scythe behind him—and lead on, lad,’ shouted the farmer, wrothly and somewhat sinisterly.

Farmer Cowlamb came into ‘this part’ with a terrible character, but no one ever said he was other than straight with a straight fellow. Willowby labourers found out that his eyes were always upon them, that he was always after them, but he paid to the last farthing, and never ‘caffled.’

The farmer’s policy was shrewd. It was acted upon, and idle Jack moved along, like any other scoundrel, abjectly nervous when found out. Moreover, the one behind him thus enlightened and encouraged by the farmer, in no choice or measured terms continually kept on admonishing the culprit.

‘I’ll be mawin’ thy legs off, Jack, if ta doesn’t look alive.’

And Adam Pant’s chin being underhung, and his reputation for doggedness as unchallengeable as idle Jack’s bravery was impeachable, idle Jack at length proved that capacity was in him, if it lingered.

Before the repast was over, into the field came the haymakers, five women and one old man.

‘Here they be,’ said the mower’s wife.

‘Ay, suer,’ assented he.

She was an easily distinguishable object ; his battered straw hat only at intervals gleamed in the sun. By-and-by she observed the old man making for them.

‘Decimus mun hev a parl.’

‘Ay, suer,’ replied he, the tone different only because his mouth was full.

Eager desire in his face, the eager garrulity of old age, Decimus was now nearing them.

‘Warm to-day, maister,’ cried Decimus, in a thin voice.

‘Ay, suer,’ said the mower, unconscious of his habit of repeating himself.

‘I thowt we should ha’ hed some showers to-day, it’s been so gleamy.’

‘The wrack’s high,’ observed the mower, glancing up at the clouds, high in the sky, sailing across the sun.

‘Ay, true. Ya be going to yar mates then next,’ assumed Decimus confidently, his hayfork stuck in the ground at such a convenient angle that it was comforting to feel one had no anxiety about one’s weight.

‘I mun be off now, or happen they’ll think me long a coming,’ said the mower.

‘An’ I mun go to my mates,’ observed the haymaker, with a chuckle meant only for himself, but showing yet no hurry, ‘or t’ owd man ’ll be efter me soon. He! he! he! I took a Bible oath forty year gone I’d be a slave to no man.’

‘He ant scar’d o’ hearing hissen speak.’

‘By goms he ant,’ said Decimus, quickly.

‘Ya got a bit o’ gress land yoursen,

Ralph ?' continued Decimus ; 'is it good land that o' yours, or nobbut middlin' ?'

'It's t'one'r.' (One or the other.)

'Oah. Ha' ye got it down yit ?'

'Noa, it's fast by the roots yit.'

'I wodn't hurry if I was thou. Lard, what a hurry they're in nowadays to git their bit o' hay. No man i' th' township got his hay better nor my faither, and he didn't hurry it. He'd let it stop spread out for long enow, and i' win'rows ; he'd ted it ower and ower agean, and let it stop i' cock for days and days till it was a'most white. He'd go in a morning and shove his hand intil it, and say—Bon it, it isn't hay yet ; it's weet, it doesn't smell like hay, and of a neet he'd remble<sup>1</sup> the owd cocks—wemble<sup>2</sup> 'em ower. Ya'd betther let your hay spoil in the close than spoil in the stack. If ya lead afore it's fit, nowt 'll eat it ; it 'll heat and stink, and get fusty and mouldy, if it doesn't get rotten, eh ?'

'I like to mak suer on't.'

'I doubt it'll be weet,' said Decimus,

<sup>1</sup> Remove.

<sup>2</sup> Upset.

peering upward in sheer hopelessness ; then, looking down, ' the frogs sithee are dark,' he reasoned, turning one over with his fork, ' they're yalla i' fine weather.'

' What ha' ye done with the baens, missis ? ' asked the mower of his wife.

' They're pulling heead-aches in a corn-field.'

The mower rose to his feet stiffly. ' I think I'm a'most harried out, and a dele of the day to look forrad to. The sun's hed a dele of power the day.'

' A day's mawin' goes far to tire a man,' said Decimus, sympathetically.

' He was up betimes,' said the woman.

' Hes t' many taties ? ' inquired the inquisitive haymaker. He meant much land set with potatoes.

' A nice few,' said the mower, moving away.

' It's a nice thing a bit o' land to a cottage if 'tis nobbut a bit, it all rhymes up.' In Decimus's opinion Ralph was of the fortunate ones to possess a cottage with the bit o' land.



‘Heigh, maister! maister!’ came a shrill voice from the other end of the field.

‘Heigh, heigh, lass!’ answered Decimus, only loud enough, though, for himself to hear, and leisurely extracting his hayfork. ‘It’s that long-waisted Polly; she can’t abide to see other folks having a parl if she’s not in it. Good morning to ye, maister. *I* mun buckle to now.’

The sun gleamed again overhead, clouds drifted under it, gloomy and dark, but tipped with silver and gold. In the south, from the horizon upward, the sky was densely blue, and in the air was that overpowering heat that is felt when a change in the atmosphere may be expected.

‘Now then,’ said Decimus, reaching the women, ‘here I be. Lard, what a stew ye make to hev a man among ye.’

‘Nay, not we; thou owd stick i’ th’ mud, let’s ha’ none o’ thy softness. We s’ll have owd Sammy here by-’m-by.’

‘I’ll be bound it’ll rain,’ said another



of the women, a Job's comforter in all weathers.

'Ay, 'tis so,' agreed another. 'One gets it into fine fettle, then there comes a shower. I thowt if we nobbut got it into win'rows it ud take no payment. Some folks reckon it's better for a drop o' rain, but I hadn't o' that opinion mysen.'

'Nor me,' agreed another, who, relating the history of a hayfork to her next neighbour, broke off to coincide with the philosopher in petticoats. She returned to her story. 'I bowt it o' owd Bellamy, poor thing ; it was a real steel-tined un, and this is nobbut iron. As pritty a little fork as ever ya seed, and now one has to go a-borrowin'.'

'Heigh,' observed another resignedly, 'if ye gits owt uncommon ye're suer to lose it.'

'There's allus another as good i' ivery-think,' remarked Decimus, as if out of temper with such invidiousness ; 'I remember well a farmer he'd a farmin' man as was a-going to leave him. He'd got it into his addle-heead

maister couldn't do beout him. "I'll put thee in the bury-hole, and then we'll see if we can't do beout thee,"' says farmer.

'Aye, that was true enow ; folks is forced to do beout 'em then.'

All ceased gossiping. Two huge loads of hay passing in a narrow lane below attracted the haymakers' attention. The waggons swayed in the ruts, so that the top-heavy loads seemed to almost get out of the perpendicular. The air was so still, they could hear the jolts and lurches of the wheels on the axletrees, the energetic exertions of the horses, the sound of their forehoofs on the sand. 'They mean to mak' suer o' theirs,' said one woman at last.

The small farmer to whom they belonged left his horses, clomb the steep bank, holding himself up by some rails in the wild-grown hedge. 'Now,' shouted he jocularly, 'how does that man treat you poor women?'

The sun blazed out again from the obscuring clouds, lighting up his red face, revealing

the beads of sweat standing thereon. He was stripped to his shirt. The sweat the Almighty decreed was standing on many human brows.

‘I think ’tis t’other way, maister,’ ventured the aggrieved male.

‘Heigh? Well, then, I moant say no more,’ returned the joker, slipping down the bank, his huge body swaying from side to side as he hurried with the awkward gait of a true son of the soil to regain his horses.

Until noon the five haymakers went up and down the length of the meadow, turning the swathes of grass, sometimes silent, sometimes objects on the road or in the distance suggesting gossip. They had a distinct view of the high road, for it and the sandy lane ran parallel. This day was one of extra bustle on the highway. It was market-day at the small town, but little more than a mile away. The haymakers could on the brook side catch a glimpse of the steeple of the town church, and behind it, the range of the wolds with the farmers’ houses dotting the slope, the grey churches, the dark

patches of wood and copse, the huge fields of green swaying corn, the elms and oaks on the ridge skirting the old Roman road. Sometimes the hill side was brilliant in sunlight—minute objects discernible, the window-panes of the farmhouses of a ruby-red, trying to the eyesight; at another moment draped in sombre shadow.

People going to market—the farmers but sparsely, owing to the time of the year. Quaint bodies stopping to open out their budget, to deliver themselves of bucolic aphorisms, their own wit or their progenitors. Teams horsed with four fine animals, waggoner with whip under arm, his eyes blinking, his walk measured and slow. Sleepy the horses' gait, yet dignified with sober gravity, the fore horse proudly conscious of his position, his neck arched, his nose at his knees, the steady old mare, his mother, in the shafts. Waggoner first, second horseman next, next plough lad. Oh, what indignity, if the waggoner's right of precedence, leav-

ing the farmyard, comes to be ignored. The carrier's cart after a time, jolt, jolt, jolt, up and down on the dusty road. To those inside, the sameness, the slow progress, accepted with meekest patience. Butter and egg baskets piled on the tilt top, pigs under a net behind, a rascally lad swinging under, taking advantage of the oblivious driver's eyes being strained forward. What tedious progress—there were the certain evidences of stoneheaps being passed like the hours by the minute-hand on a clock face.

Decimus looked up.

‘They don’t go ower fast to-day. I think them hosses ud trot an hour on a cabbage leaf.’

‘Forget me not,’ said a woman, reading the carrier’s motto.

‘One isn’t likely,’ said Decimus, cynically.

The meridian passed, the heat seemed to have increased. The dog roses on the hedges seemed to be having a mazy dance, and even the tender brown-tipped sprays of the ‘quick’

(hawthorn). Nor did this escape the eye of Decimus.

‘Sithee,’ said he to a woman at his elbow, ‘Robin Hood and his little men.’

But below, on the banks, the star-like bramble flowers remained a solace and rest for the eyes. Here and there the Psyches of honey-hunters, the improvident sippers of nectar, with closed wings, reposed or gorged themselves on the petals. It strained the eyes, looking earnestly ; the haymakers’ eyes were easier, fixed on the dying grass at their feet—an overpowering drought causing one, then another, to look up towards the road with wistful eyes of anticipation—the women with their hands shading their eyes, the man not taking that trouble. The expression on his face not a sanguine one, who would hurry to administer to his creature comforts? At last a figure of Indian red, with light-hued head gear, was descried, and expectation soared high. At first there was some difficulty in determining whether

the figure was advancing or receding, but by noting certain fixed objects a decision was arrived at.

‘I swe-at like a brock,’ said Decimus, carrying his finger round his shirt collar.

But hopefulness had asserted itself. More briskly the swathes rolled over ; but on coming up again it was discovered to be a child in a crimson and black-check frock, a tiny yellow straw hat with blue ribbon. Then came heavy disappointment, Decimus chuckling at his superior wit and penetration.

‘Who teld ye they’d bring us some sleek?’ he queried incredulously.

‘I thowt it mud be th’ dowter,’ humbly and moodily apologised the woman who had raised the hopes of the other four. She was the woman known by the pseudonym of ‘long-waisted Polly.’ Her voice was quite out of character with her muscular development. She had the limbs and height of an Amazon, and her voice might have been given to her by a ventriloquist, it sounded as



if it had travelled some distance before it reached her, and had become wheezy, squeaky, and thin.

‘I dar’say,’ observed Decimus sneeringly.

One is led to be curious to learn who the person so anxiously looked for might be. It was none other than Farmer Cowlamb’s daughter. Farmer Cowlamb was not noted for a lavish style of living, nor a free ale barrel. But as it was the rule for ale to be sent into the hay or harvest-field, custom was bowed to. The farmer’s daughter at that moment was making her way to them. The large stone jug she carried was a trial on so hot a day, but her organisation, although physically she felt it toil, would not suffer her to look upon her self-imposed task as a hardship. The hayfield was some distance from the farmhouse, although from the upper windows the field could be seen. Indeed, the house, standing on a hill, commanded every field on the farm. The labourers knew that Cowlamb had a glass in his bedroom, and



could tell without stirring from the house when they were or were not doing their duty. It was almost impossible to skulk behind hedges, for he had them all cut low, and trees were an abomination in the agriculturist's eyes, for they shadowed too much soil. The ditcher was the only happy fellow who could cheat him, and then it was a poor satisfaction, stooping ankle deep in water and loam, for the privilege of taking things easy. Farmer Cowlamb had a habit of prowling round and surprising his men. True, when he so suddenly showed himself he had a smile on his face, but it was one so sardonically shrewd, it did not add to the comfort of a man's mind if he had been remiss. Ever on tenter-hooks, the labourers felt themselves bound to be ever stirring. And yet they had all a good as well as a hard word for the 'maister.' If they did their duty he was no grumbler, if they shirked their work he was not chary of his tongue; and although he counted out his money, he surrendered it as

if they had a right to it. Abuse them as he would, he never swore, being a professing Christian, a zealous Dissenter, and a class leader.

Down a long green lane Iphis Cowlamb hurried. The descent was easy, and to a certain extent exhilarating, for a slight breeze caught her and wafted the scent of the wheat flower into her nostrils—a scent that gives one a faint sense of suffocation, for all the world the same, only balmier, as that which greets one's nose in an ancient dusty flour mill. It was scarcely a flower, so insignificant and frail—a sharp wind and it was gone ; but no, it held on tenaciously—it only feared hail and an excessive blast.

‘In about six weeks we’ll be into harvest,’ had said Farmer Cowlamb at breakfast, ‘wheat’s looking well and heavy i’ th’ heead, forrad ; hope nowt ’ll hurt the flower now.’

Iphis, remembering her father's remark, looked over the hedge into the waving green. She was not one to regard the beauty of vege-

tation sentimentally, she came of far too hard-headed a sire. Her conjecture was on the yield there might be. Her father thought there would be six quarters to the acre. Like him she was engrossed with speculations, speculations on her own futurity, if she had luck. Had she not her 'caid' lambs, her own broods of chickens and ducklings, her odd calf. But although her determined old father cropped his hedges, he did not eradicate the honeysuckle and the dog-rose, the vetches and the snapdragon, and the bindweed hated most of all showed the white gauntlet of defiance. They straggled over the hedge and through it, intertwined themselves with the bramble and the persistent ash growth. All were in flower now, vetches yellow and lilac, white cornbine, little pink heads of pimpernoles, blue harebells and juicy-stalked dandelions on the bank below, charming the eye with colour, soothing the senses with enduring fragrance. In spite of her matter-of-fact way of looking at things, the result of her training, the girl

was not insensible to this prodigal display. Her nature was truly feminine. The country life and country air were her *life*. She had known what it was to be away from unfettered sylvan sights, had sighed for them, had lived her prolonged season at a finishing school, possessed with a hungry craving for freedom, and returning, had stood out in the open with a voracious desire to take in deep draughts of native air, of native scent, and to sight at one comprehensive glance familiar objects and landmarks. To grasp again that sense which is so inexpressible, so indefinable, yet so real because it has grown up with us, and which a stultified air, a confined area, seems to crush out of us. The cows, the horses, the sheep, seemed to emit in the air a healthfulness she was glad to breathe. She had an intense love of her life, like her old father up early and a-bed early. She possessed no idle temperament, and her active mind was allayed with daily duties. She milked and made up butter, she fed calves and the motherless lambs, she

hunted up the eggs, and her butter, she believed, was sweeter than her neighbours, her eggs more spotless. As the old cock crows the young one learns. Farmer Cowlamb believed himself equal to any man in farming, and perhaps he was, and his daughter Iphis believed herself the equal of any woman in the dairy, not even age and experience to be considered. The mother had excited emulation in Iphis in such pursuits from her earliest years. Mrs. Cowlamb now had to rest somewhat on her laurels, her precocious daughter stoutly resisting encroachment on what she now considered her own domain.

Iphis's face was red, perspiration stood under her eyes when she reached the hayfield. Even the slight breeze which had arisen was not sufficient to cool her. Her appearance was the signal for inaction. This she noted with an inward humour. Her father's own 'baen,' she had a keen insight for salient points of advantage takers. Hayforks were stuck upright in the ground, like so many

sentinels closed in, retaining their positions. Only Decimus carried his, which he extended at his favourite angle, both hands at the end and his chest on his hands.

‘I should ha’ come afore,’ said the ministrant, simply; ‘but I been to market and sold my butter and eggs. I made haste home an’ all, I knew you’d want some drink.’

The voice was weak and thin—the voice of a child, while the figure was that of a maturing maiden.

‘I’m all of a lily-low,’ said Polly of the long waist, in wheezy call for pity and first turn.

‘A nice lass she is to bring us some drink to us dinners,’ said Decimus, with the obsequiousness of a flatterer.

Their encomiums, it was plain to see, were taken at their worth. No yielding or simpering was there in the sharp, clear face. A Circe in a hayfield. She did look round critically at their work, but without depreciating it, or giving them reason to believe that she

undervalued it. It was a second nature with her to take an estimate ; had it been necessary, she was qualified to take the farm in hand.

‘ Aye,’ muttered long-waisted Polly, ‘ she’s a chip o’ th’ owd block ; ya don’t gammon owd Cowlamb easy, nor her a nayther.’

The women threw themselves down where the dying grass was thickest, and then Decimus essayed to settle down into the same position, but being stiffer in his joints with him it was a work of time.

‘ Thou hadn’t eppen at getting down, Decimus,’ said Polly, mischievously.

‘ Maybe thou weant be when t’ gits thotty more year o’ thy back. Thou’s a knack o’ saying nasty things, Poll.’

‘ And thou’rt such an’ a whimmy whammy man,’ said Polly’s bosom friend.

‘ What call was there now to put thy vardy in?’ said Decimus hotly.

‘ If ye can’t joke wi’ them ye know, who are ye to joke wi’?’ retorted Polly.



‘As if I was that ken-specked for ye all to set o’ me.’

‘Here, take the jug, Decimus, and pour up.’

‘Glad I be. Aye,’ cried he, in servile surprise, and groaning at the jug’s weight, ‘thou carried this? thou’s as strong as a gelly-boy.’

Decimus poured into the pot mug, the jug resting on the ground, and drank off first himself. There was a chorus of deprecation which did not effect Decimus’s steady drinking. But when, breathless, he took the mug from his lips, too exhausted to speak, his face was for a moment the incarnation of surprise. Then he relaxed into stony apathy, mulish obstinacy, and thick utterance.

‘Thou’s used thy time badly—all on ye—if ya aint got to know yit, the drawer allus hes first and last. I don’t feel so bad mysen now,’ said he gravely.

‘It braids o’ me thou’rt like the owd woman. “I’ll go home and hot some ale to warm us,” she said. Efter she’d got home



and warmed hersen by the fire, and drunk a lot of the hot ale, she said to hersen as she went back to 'em, "I don't feel a bit cowl mysen, they'll want no hot ale."'

When one's own need is over, one sympathises less with the needs of one's neighbours. Decimus cackled loudly—

'Human natur, human natur,' said he.

A decrepit man on the footpath looking over the hedge eyed the recumbent party hungrily. The old man in the field had the advantage of him ; Decimus was not yet past work. With the aid of his stick, but with feet scarcely responsive to his eagerness, he reached the gate. Seeing he was not viewed unfavourably, he ventured to draw back the catch and push the gate open, and totter into the field, proceeding carefully because of his more uncertain foothold on the grass.

'Hello! here's Mister Tritt,' said one, as he crept up to the party, his face expectant yet submissive, showing a willingness for gossip, a faint hope for alms.

‘ Billy Tritt,’ corrected he deferentially, the queerness and quaintness of his voice affording some mirth even for them. ‘ I doant like folks to call *me* mister.’

‘ Well-a-day, you was such an a gentlemanlike man, dressed up, and wi’ a long hat on, I couldn’t speak to ye another way.’

‘ It was a hat, Mrs. Hazelby, as was gen to me, or I couldn’t make so bold as to wear it.’

‘ That’s very well, Mr. Tritt, bud we know you seen better days.’

‘ Yis, Mrs. Hazelby, that’s reight enow. I been unlucky all my life. Some folks starts well and ends wi’ nowt, and some starts wi’ nowt and ends wi’ rucks o’ money.’

‘ ’Tis strange, Mr. Tritt, thou made so bad a out, and got no relations to look efter you.’

‘ No. I’d nobbut one brother, Mrs. Towse, and he behaved real bad to me—he did. He got out of a place, and so I teld him he mud come to my lodge and live wi’ me till he did get something. And he wore my clothes, and

I got him some shirts, and found him in his living. And one morning when I was going out, I says to him, "Robin, thou'll not go to Moortown Stattus?" and he says, "No, not I; there'll be no good i' me going there spending money." And he went out wi' me. Be dal'd if he didn't go back to the lodge, and git my best clothes on, and go off to Stattus, and I've niver seed him fra that day to this.'

'That's a long while since, Mr. Tritt.'

'A vast o' years, Mrs. Towse. Old Corbutt was parson here, then; and allus maister-beast he would be; and I remember the next day he shouted after me—"Hi! Tritt!" and I turned round and seed who it was; so I made a bow; and the parson shouts—"So the butterfly's gone!" "I don't know what *you* mean, sir," says I puzzled like; and says I—"I don't know what *ya* mean! What d'ya mean?" "Why, Robin's gone!" says he. "Eh, joy and tuppence go wi' him," says I. "I hear he's done you out of about ten pound," says he. "That's about

the figure, I do believe, sir, your reverence," says I. "Well, Tritt," says he, "if you'll come up to my house I'd gie you a sarch-warrant," says he. Well, now, I couldn't stand that nohow. Lor', I couldn't ha' gone up agean him, and hed him locked up, nor no man. If he took all ee hed, nobbut keep out o' the road, I wouldn't meddle wi' him. So I says to him, "That I shan't, then; I want no sarch-warrants; let him go, the jumped up haymaker." And the parson he stared at me, and says he, "Why, Tritt, you've a better principle nor me. If it had been my brother I should ha' hed him up." "Heigh, bud I'm *not* going to hev him up," says I, and I moved mysen off. He was such an owd maister-beast i' th' parish, I thowt nowt mud do, but if I stopped cafflin wi' him he'd make me hev Robin up.'

The farmer's daughter, the flower of the field, the true queen of the meadow, and standing, had listened to the old man's story with kindly interest. Feminine pity about

her mouth, seeing even a ne'er-do-well accepting the whirlwind of his life. His spirit, so abject and cringing, did not excite in her a feeling of contempt, but a soreness of heart. Billy Tritt was old and tottering, his face was colourless and fleshless, his eyes lacked lustre, and his hair was thin and dead. Was life now of any value to him?

One woman, with the true instinct of charity, proffered a huge piece of bread with a flat slice of bacon resting thereon. Another woman at her feet handed him a table-knife, wherewith on the bread he could cut the bacon. He ate ravenously.

‘I’m afraid, Billy, thou don’t git over much to eat,’ said the charitable one, with some feeling.

‘True it is, missis. One can’t do much to help one’s sen, and parish pay weant go very far.’

The farmer’s daughter took the jug and poured out some ale into the mug which Decimus held. She placed the jug on the

ground, took the mug out of Decimus's hand, and advanced to Mister Tritt.

‘Here, sithee, drink!’

‘Nay, missis, I darsn’t hardlins; it ud git into my heead maybe.’

‘Drink,’ repeated she, laconically.

‘Heigh!’ encouraged the women and Decimus, ‘drink a sup on it, it’ll put heart into thee.’

‘I’m suer it’ll stand me i’ th’ steead of a dinner th’ day,’ said Mr. Tritt, unctuously, returning the mug to Iphis.

‘She’s like the old man,’ commented the haymakers one among another, ‘she’d hev her pennorth, and them as didn’t suit her ud hev a time like a toad under a harrow, but she’d be good enow wi’ them as did fair, eh?’

‘Better be like t’ owd man than t’ owd woman.’

‘She’d rob a workhouse baen of his breakfast.’

A clatter of horse’s heels, first on the foot-path, then on the road, and now muffled

somewhat on the grassy wayside, caused all of them to strain their eyes towards the high road. A young chesnut colt at break-neck speed was coming, a bare-back rider, holding on with but simply a halter, a 'cule' only in the horse's mouth. The horse carried its head well, its neck finely arched; it had splendid shoulders, and that action of the knees which is only seen in chargers or in the draught horse. It was a half-bred, possessing the mettle of the sire, some of his fineness, the mare's bulk and action and shagginess of mane and tail and fetlocks.

'That be your young hoss,' said Decimus indignantly to the girl; 'Maister ud be fine and mad to see him galloped a' day like this. He's making him up, an' all, for Herecastle Fair.'

The farmer's daughter did not answer Decimus, her eye though following the rider, who was leaning back taking his situation as something highly exhilarating and enjoyable, because there was a spice of danger in it. His



hair was flying, his shirt fluttering with the slight breeze he met.

‘That blacksmith lad ’ll ride owt. That colt ant brokken a nayther.’

Still she answered not, but a smile traversed her face. She could see him branch off the turnpike road and turn up the lane. Proceeding up the hill his pace somewhat moderated, his hair still fluttering in the breeze, an atom of the blue shirt now and again distinguishable above the hedge.

‘He’s off the ramper now,’ said Decimus, ‘he’ll ha’ to guide hissen, or maister ’ll have summut to say.’

Still Iphis answered not.

‘I think yon chap teks her eye,’ whispered a woman.

‘I’ve heerd,’ whispered another, ‘he mud hev for the axin ; eh, Mrs. Towse?’

‘Nay, niver,’ muttered she, ‘’tis not for such as he.’



## CHAPTER 2.

## A NORTHERN FARMER.

FARMER COWLAMB was of recent settlement in Willowby, but he had been long enough in the village to gain the reputation of a man endowed with high and sterling common sense. His character was discovered to be unimpeachable, his rectitude undeniable. He was a man who compelled deference and respect. He was popular because he had no one but himself and a kind Providence to thank for his social uprising. It was no shame to him that he had begun life as a bettermost kind of a day labourer. Looking back, it was some satisfaction to him that his intelligence and shrewdness commanded a master's confidence. He had not to live under a man long, his

cleverness undiscovered. When he married, some people considered the woman who had accepted him had not looked high. She did not bring him any dowry other than her sweet face, good character, and gentle manners, but the young man idolised her, and exerted himself to the utmost to make home happy. She had been brought up comfortably—her father a small shopkeeper—she had received a fair education and was somewhat more refined than the girls about her. When Cowlamb found himself with such a pearl of a wife he began to think—to deem it unsatisfactory that his intelligence, which was worth so much to a master, should not be brought into play for his own profit. He had ever been minutely careful with his money.

Ten years he laboriously gave his best energies to a small farm. At that time science in farming was a thing undreamed of; Cowlamb was far in advance of his day. The tenant before him had been minus a backbone, always backward with his rent, in some years

had been 'forgiven' it, as they say ; the land, he averred piteously each rent-day, was 'bitter bad, ringing clay,' conducive to foot-rot in sheep, and unmanageable. In after years, when he could freely talk, Cowlamb declared that he had averaged a hundred a-year clear savings off this small farm, and gave it up in fine 'fettle.' He was enabled to take a larger and better farm. He had no difficulty in finding a 'friend' to advance him money. But here the wife of his youth left him with two boys.

He had not had the best helpmate in her. Her early education had not fitted her to work with such a plodder. But he never complained. She gave of her best ungrudgingly, to herself confessing her deficiencies. He never complained. Without a word or thought against her, he strove to balance any slips in economy she might make by extra exertion on his own part. He begrudged her nothing, but he treated himself as a slave, and he had a vigilant eye over those whom he employed.

The wife should have lived. When success had crowned his efforts she would have graced his home. Her gentle influence would have done much to soften the asperity of Cowlamb's character, which increased strikingly after he had passed his meridian.

For near upon a score of years Farmer Cowlamb remained a widower. He had loved his wife, but he had his time too much occupied to sit repining; only for a long season he missed her cheerful and sweet presence. At meal-times he sat down with an ache at his heart—the presence of her two boys brought her forcibly to his mind; in the evenings he brooded, and was much preoccupied. On Sabbath mornings he missed her—missed her as he walked down to chapel, his eye roving over his own crops or those of his neighbours. She was not by his side to listen and pay attention to what he said. She had always evinced interest. He missed her at his side in the long narrow pew in which he had such scant space for his knees. He did not now

regard the greater plenitude of space with satisfaction. He missed her when the minister and his wife paid their quarterly visit of ceremony, staying tea and supper. She made tea for them in her best gown, in their honour wore the brooch and bracelets he had squandered money over at a feast as a fairing for her years ago. It only made him sad when he looked at the oil picture he had of her. It was an extraordinary picture, too, but in his judgment most faithful; the brooch and the bracelets were beyond criticism. Neither of the two lads had her face, neither of them her character or temperament, and that he regretted. They were clever boys, and he had a fancy that she would be pleased if she could only know how well he was having them educated, a deficiency in himself he had ever deplored. They should learn also the practical part of farming as well as the theoretical; they should stand in the front rank of agriculturists. *Nihil est melius agricultura.* They should

grow up good farmers and well-informed men. He could read and write, and he could talk fluently if the staple of conversation was confined to his own pursuits, but in company where other topics were pre-eminent, he found his stock of ideas most meagre. He couldn't talk to Mrs. Robinson or the other ministers' wives. The minister's wife sat where his own dear wife used to sit, rustling in silk, superior, feeling herself superior. They were suave, his contributions were liberal, but he could not rid himself of the idea that they made talk for him, that the minister prided himself on accommodating his language to a person of Mr. Cowlamb's acquirements. For some time, unless he was going to market, Cowlamb felt uncomfortable in his Sunday clothes, if he donned them on a week day. When he looked at his grey knees they looked unnatural. The minister knew that he wore his Sunday clothes in honour of the company who favoured him with their sleek and urbane presence. Cowlamb was respect-

ful, but he felt the affected patter of the minister's 'good lady' was contemptible, and he had wit enough to believe himself at the bottom worth a hundred of the ministers as far as the stamp of man went. He was beyond them all in shrewdness, talent, and capability.

So passed the years, and the two lads were reaching manhood, tall as himself, and likely to be as broad-shouldered. He 'fixed' one, the other staying with him a little longer, but only biding his time. A year or two passed, and a farm was found for him. Bear it in mind, Cowlamb had changed from farm to farm. He was now a person of some weight. He had one of the largest and best farms in the county, and his elder son established in the farm he had last vacated, the younger, though little over twenty, already proving himself excellent among stock, and thriving as a grazier.

And now Farmer Cowlamb was alone. He startled the neighbourhood, however, by marrying again. No one had the faintest



conception of the widower contemplating matrimony. He was married before any one suspected his intention. This time his choice fell upon his own servant girl. What business was it of any one's who he married, or for people to cavil at his choice? The wonder was a nine days' one. The sons did not ride the high horse, show or express dissatisfaction, so Cowlamb's neighbours, perhaps, felt a little ashamed of themselves. Farmer Cowlamb was a man who had never relegated a whit of his authority. His two sons still looked up to him ; he left them to themselves to give them confidence, but they felt him at their back. There was no fear in them that he would be biassed unduly—they knew it was almost a thing impossible for any one to lead him by the nose. The servant girl was a staid woman to them—it was the neighbours' spleen terming her a girl, they considered. She had been six or seven years in Cowlamb's service, a kind of working house-keeper, diligent, exact, most scrupulous, of



few words, her very person, as her towels and linen and the other household gods, the perfection of sweetness and cleanliness. She possessed some good looks, but she certainly was not a woman to spend her time before a mirror. It was very possible it had never crossed her mind that personal appearance beyond cleanliness was anything in this world. Moreover, she was a devout Wesleyan, and as strait-laced as the most arrant Puritan could desire.

Cowlamb's second wife bore to him a daughter—our heroine. And after the birth of this child, Mrs. Cowlamb the second, from careful began to be noted as stingy, grasping, and full of endeavour to cut down expenses. She was so rigid, even Cowlamb himself chafed, and at last came to open rebellion, the element of discord arising from the periodical supplies of plumcake being cut off, Mrs. Cowlamb considering that currants and raisins and lemon peel encroached too much on her egg and butter and poultry money. However,

their own table was better supplied ever after, if the same parsimony still held among the men and maids.

So ten or twelve years passed, until Farmer Cowlamb began to feel his knees stiffening, a desire for rest, a wish to see Sam in the great farm, and himself in a lesser one. Tom could have Sam's farm and retain the land he held as well, then either lad would have nothing to complain of. Cowlamb's desire was to have a snug little farm to exercise his wits on and keep his mind occupied—a few hundred acres to farm to a wonder.

Mrs. Cowlamb at first resented the plan ; but this was only one way of making her husband more obstinate and stubborn. He was three or four years, though, before he found the farm to his mind. Many landlords gave him the refusal when they heard of his intention ; it was even looked upon as a feather in the cap to have such a man as Cowlamb for tenant.

The farm was at last found and taken, and a new house was built upon it, and Cowlamb's

wishes consulted in the erection. His predecessor's farming having been somewhat lax, Cowlamb obtained many concessions from the landlord.

Iphis, the farmer's daughter, did, indeed, regret leaving Snailhorn, though her regrets, not knowing scarcely how to justify them, she kept to herself. Not even the brand-new house reconciled her. There could be no house so comfortable as the quaint one at Snailhorn. In old times it had been the inn. The coach had changed horses there, and a tremendous business had been carried on, although there was no village to speak of, and it lay remote from any town. The old farm buildings had been something wonderful in their day ; inscriptions in a tongue unknown to her were still legible, and they had often exercised her mind, even after Mr. Gerlimore, the parson, had given her the English of them. She had once climbed a ladder to observe more closely the coat of arms at the end of the barn, and lingered over the inscription below it.

HÆC DOMVS DAT AMAT PVNIT  
CONSERVAT HONORAT EQVITIAM  
PACEM CRIMINA IVRA BONOS.

1620.

The almshouses carried a tablet—‘Deo et Divitibus. Ao.Do., 1620.’ According to tradition, all Snailhorn had once been charity land, rapaciously encroached upon, until only a few paddocks remained to support the two decrepit almsmen, who could remember the day when there were many participants ; but the old men were almost afraid to open their lips, afraid lest the charity should not last out their day.

She was told to leave the roomy old house, its deep embayed windows looking out upon verdant pastures, shaded with prodigious elms. She had completed her schooling, and set herself steadfastly to walk and do her duty in that state of life unto which she believed it had pleased God to call her. She did not desire any other life. She had her day-dreams. She hoped, she did urgently hope,

that she should get a husband, and they would live on a farm as her father and mother had done, and make money, and be great folks, and be highly respected, so that her tombstone should carry an inscription similar to the one on Mrs. Sarah Horsnaye's in Snailhorn Churchyard :—

SHE WAS A DUTIFUL DAUGHTER, AN AFFECTIONATE WIFE,  
A TENDER PARENT, A KIND AND BENEVOLENT FRIEND.  
HER PLAIN, HONEST, AND UNADORNED VIRTUES WERE AN  
ORNAMENT TO THE RANK WHICH SHE HELD IN SOCIETY.

There was a defect in the lines, in that they did not rhyme, but the sentiment was everything that could be desired. The last line to Iphis's mind was very impressive.

And to leave Snailhorn! But there was no help for it. Sam had a wife, if he and she were not always on the best terms with each other. Anyhow, Sam could not do with his sister there.

She hated the new house, with its thin brick walls and light doors and gingerbread woodwork, but she was fain to submit.

Cowlamb jokingly endeavoured to soften the blow by telling her that she would find a sweetheart there maybe. Had Sam been a bachelor Cowlamb would not have left his Iphis behind him. She was the solace and joy of his declining years. Great rejoicings take place in a family when the boy comes ; Cowlamb was as full of delight with a girl after his boys. Her education in the essentials of farmhouse life had almost been complete before she went to boarding-school. When a wee toddler, the mother by precept was teaching her child, and by example. The quondam servant, thrifty, had become the thriftier wife, and saw no higher or more enviable rank than the one in which she was placed, superintending her house, careless of any relaxation, abhorring dressy people—‘ fine folks ’—her eye resolutely set upon the uttermost farthing. Mrs. Cowlamb used to rehearse her sparse opinions to Iphis until Iphis was inoculated with the same prejudices, imbued with the same interests—ready to look upon those people with

contempt who were careful of their hands. It was one of Cowlamb's proudest boasts that his girl had the light hand for butter, and was second to none when her sleeves were rolled up.

Between father and daughter a great affection subsisted. She liked her father best, had always liked him best. The mother's temper was sour and cross, the whine of her voice was harassing. When her father was absent, a chill seemed to rest upon the house, and all underlouts found it almost unendurable. The mother was unsympathetic ; there seemed to be something in the house dashing to a young buoyant spirit. Iphis had been precocious, and was treated more like an elderly person than a young girl. She had the best of clothes if they were quiet in hue ; Iphis followed the fashion only as near as Mrs. Cowlamb's sense of decorum would admit that fashion was to be followed. When taken to market she had no lack of money wherewith to indulge her girlish whims, but at the same time, daily, from morning until night, homilies



were dinned into her ears of its value. She did not absolutely weary of them ; but she came to regard the hard set people who might cross her path as in some way responsible for their sorry condition. The mother had her maternal solicitude for the girl ; but hers was never the bosom to invite exuberant affection. Iphis never confided in her mother, but became self-contained, preferring men's company. Sometimes she had extraordinary fits of wilfulness, for which the mother had cold, complaining censure, soon to fall upon ears careless of such reproof. But to her father these wilfulnesses were food for mirth, for admiration. In them he saw a high spirit—his own. She favoured him in character and temperament, in looks ; everyone told him so. His pride in his fine stalwart lass was only equalled by his affection.

‘She’s a stomach for work,’ boasted he proudly ; ‘she’ll not go far away.’

She had abundant health, the common ailments of childhood had scarcely reached her.



Once only had blanched cheeks given cause for alarm, causing advice to be sought. She would never be better, the wise man said, unless she milked a red cow. But her constitution being robust, she tided over this defection from health, the morning air acting like a tonic, the healthful smell of the cattle, no doubt, working wonders. That was long before she was in her teens ; it was her initiation into the secrets of the dairy. From her infancy she had been a diligent and successful searcher after eggs.

How happy was the day when she whispered to herself 'no more school!' Her father—she preferred his world-wise experience to all the cleverness and polish of the acquaintances she made at Treminster. Her country bluntness and longing for home had always been a standing joke against her. She never took kindly to the finishing school ; school fare was not like farmhouse fare. And those who ridiculed her sometimes regretted their spleen, for Iphis, like her father, was keen and subtle in retort.

When she reached home it was seen that she had matured. Even to the untutored eyes of her parents, besides an accession of physique there was abundant promise of all those feminine attributes which call forth admiration. She was lithesome and tall, her figure was excellently proportioned, her step elastic, one could fancy every muscle was nervous when she stirred. But it was the same sweet, homely face, the same eager, clear gaze ; there was the old wilfulness, but an increase of the latent mischief lurking in her eyes and about her mouth. It had been dormant, now it was waking, was waiting, for what?

‘She’s as gallus as iver!’ the farmer shouted fondly and boisterously.

And yet she could look very cross and severe when out of temper. In her ordinary mood her face carried an interested, ready expression. There was good-nature and frankness.

But her eyes as she sprang out of the

trap were full of honest fun, with a spice of some added element. The old farmer chuckled; she would make mischief among the fellows. There would be a fine scramble for her, and Cowlamb rubbed his hands in great glee.

‘When a young fellow comes round there’ll be a mean-mischief invitation to come to closer quarters,’ commented he to his wife. ‘She’ll dare a fellow to make a fool o’ hissen, an’ want to git his ames round her.’

‘If I see her behavin’ like that——’

‘Bah! get on wi’ thy starchin’,’ said Cowlamb, giving his wife an impatient push.

## CHAPTER 3.

## DAWN OF LOVE.

LIFE at Willowby was not the same full life as at Snailhorn. Iphis had less occupation. Cowlamb felt it at first. A little country town was near, but Iphis did not trouble it much. On market days she carried thither farm produce ; sometimes on a Sabbath evening she went to the pretentious chapel. There were seasons when her time hung heavy upon her hands, and then she would wander out into the lane ; but more often her steps were directed towards the farm-buildings. The old farmhouse was subdivided, and under its roof a labourer and the garthman lived, both men having elected to come from Snailhorn with the farmer. Cowlamb often looked upon the old house ruefully, half regretting he had not

made shift with it. A farmer likes to look out of his window upon the crew-yard. Iphis was often there. The garthman had a numerous brood of children, and Iphis was good among them, her appearance always being hailed with uproarious tokens of good will. Homely herself and companionable, here indeed was a life full of charm for her, homeliness to a degree, and a flavour of sweet domestic concord. Her unpretentious ways with the grown-up people had long ago gained over their hearts. In and out the cottages she went without ceremony, no ill-look or subdued resentment to intimate they only bent under pressure. Iphis was as familiar to them as their own children. In their eyes, with her position, the money that had been spent over her, her winsome looks and her clever housewifely notions, Iphis Cowlamb was the beau ideal of what a maiden should be. Daughters of their own just as fresh and fair to look upon they could not rank with her. It would have almost been a profanity to have harboured in their placid bosoms such a pretentious thought.

To Iphis the house filled with children, namely the garthman's, was more generally favoured by her. The day following her walk down to the hayfield she wandered up to the garthman's cottage. Dinner was over with them, excepting for one, a little fellow who had been missing at the proper hour. But while the child was eating, the mother was not losing time. With ten children the mother had to look sharp about her.

‘Drat the stockings!’ the good wife cried, with resigned but cheerful impatience as she took up the eleventh pair, and, weary of her seemingly endless task, surveyed the dilapidations; ‘they’ve as many holes in ’em as days in a week.’

‘You’ve no time to sit still,’ said Iphis, sympathetically; ‘let me help you. And there’s Joel going to sleep over his dinner.’

The little fierce fellow, weary with his morning’s run upon his young legs, could scarcely keep his eyes open. He fairly nodded over his pudding. His hair, with the rough

administration of cap-replacing by rough plough-lads, stood upright. The urchin had a pugnacious profile, a defiant curl of the lip, and a sturdy little nose. A child to admire, chubby and intelligent, alive to every movement of those about him, having a ready construction upon every one's intentions and character. Fierceness was outrageously manifest in every gesture.

‘Wacken up, wacken up, Joel, and eat his dinner. I’m suer,’ declared the mother, turning to Iphis, ‘in his way he works harder ’n any man on the farm. He’s allus on the land or efter their heels. He’ll be a man,’ said she, with fond pride, and in a louder key, to attract the drowsy child’s attention. ‘Joel, wacken up, and efter dinner thou s’ll go i’ the granary to Eli to help break cake. Eat up his puddin’, then he s’ll ha’ meat. No puddin’, no meat—not that th’ baen’s dainty,’ the mother defended.

But the weary Joel seemed more inclined to weep drowsily, and to himself causelessly.

‘He is cross, he does hing his lip,’ said Iphis, her light laugh doing more to compose the infantile mind of the impressionable Joel. ‘Ah, ah,’ cried Iphis, clapping her hands, ‘if he doesn’t eat his puddin’ he’ll niver be a man to go wi’ me to the land o’ green ginger, where houses are thatched wi’ pancakes and haystacks buttered wi’ wool.’

Joel struggled to regain complete consciousness. He so far succeeded as to look into his mother’s eyes comprehendingly, impressed with the gravity that lay there, content with the affection beaming in them. Then he turned to Iphis, concerned that she should not lose faith in him ; it was his desire to be her henchman. He regarded her very gravely, and after a moment or two’s thought, his spoon halfway in his mouth, inquired, with abrupt seriousness—

‘How owd art thou, Iphis Cowlamb?’

‘As owd as my tongue and a bit owder than my teeth, Joel,’ answered Iphis.

Joel was vaguely conscious of having been



answered with the same enigmatical reply on some previous occasion when his inquiring mind had been on the same track.

‘Tush, baen,’ said Mrs. Towse, reprovingly, ‘to ax sich questions. Eat his puddin’.’

Joel seemed desirous to inquire further, but the mother again interposed with uplifted finger.

‘Ssh ; hear, see, and say nothing,’ which to Joel was another axiom difficult to grasp ; so Joel occupied his mind with his pudding, and at length, the platter being clean, Joel uplifted it in his chubby hands and commenced to frugally polish it with his tongue. Mrs. Towse, occupied with her darning, was for a few moments forgetful of Joel and his idiosyncrasies. Her eyes at last were raised to Iphis, when she caught a glimpse of her boy. ‘Joel ! Joel ! Joel !’ cried she in consternation and shame. ‘Joel, put down that plate. O ! ’tis naughty to lick your plate like that.’

Joel showed as much surprise as his mother consternation. He obeyed her, opening wide

his eyes, and, partly in fright and partly rebellious, posed her.

‘Why doant ee do so other days?’

Between peals of laughter from Iphis were protestations from Mrs. Towse. Then she, seized with the humour of the thing, joined in with Iphis, until Joel’s wonder increased to such an extent he did not know for certain who was the craziest of the trio.

‘I think nobody iver hed sich an a cretur,’ at last said Mrs. Towse, when calm enough. But it was some time before she could return to the subjects which she was always expounding to Iphis and those who would listen to her—namely, Towse’s anxiety about the stock, her family cares, her poultry cares. Iphis was not garrulous herself, but she would listen attentively. If people answered for her, she was not one to raise objection with occasional wilfulness; she was satisfied with not having any say, verbally. But often Iphis was thinking, contemplating, when apparently listening to Mrs. Towse’s perorations. She

had not observed Joel until the horrified look on the mother's face warned her that something was going wrong. And now Mrs. Towse had taken up the thread again.

‘As I said, we didn’t want that owd goose to sit; we kicked her owd nest ower times and times, but ’twas no use, we couldn’t git no eggs. But I mun be handy,’ said she, with a complete change of voice, ‘that lad ’ill be in for his things. He said he’d take ’em back wi’ him. You see, poor lad, they do his weshin’; bud law, there’s a lot o’ jobs a man can’t do for hissen, and I teld him if he wanted a bit o’ mendin’ doin’ he mun bring it down to me. I plenty to do, bud he was my hafe sister’s baen. His faither married agean, and there’s a lot on ’em by the second woman, and I don’t think she looks ower kindly on Ephraim. One can’t blame Ephraim’s father — ’twas a queer fix for him to be in, left i’ that way. I’m suer he did well to put her lad ’prentice.’

‘We were all treated alike,’ said Iphis; ‘I

was a long while before I could understand that Sam's mother wasn't mine.'

'There was two on 'em. T'owdest was in good sarvice, but silly lad got reading Captain Cook, such lies they put i' print, and he niver settled no more.'

'What became of him, then, Mrs. Towse?'

'He went to sea. Ephraim says he sarves the Queen. She doesn't pay 'em ower well a nayther, if she gies 'em fine clo's. Bud if he'd hed his poor mother to think on, he'd niver ha' goan. Poor thing, she'd niver ha' slep o' nights, for fear he'd be drowned.'

'Mother allus made Sam and Tom comfortable,' said Iphis with great confidence.

'There's such a difference i' women,' the garthman's wife remarked, her voice carefully under control. 'A sight o' difference,' she repeated, hurriedly collecting clothes and linen and tying them up in a crimson cotton handkerchief.

'I wshed his handkercher, and a piltripely thing it is, and his shirts—I put 'em through

some fresh water, they was such a bad colour, laws-a-me. I tell Ephraim as soon as he feels hissen on his legs efter he's lowse, he mun pick up wi' some likely lass. It'll niver do for him to be behowden to this body and t'other body. They tell me i' towns a man can't get so much as a button set on ; they're ower nice to be wise.'

'Where's thy mother?' asked a voice outside.

'Here he be, a'most afore I've done. Come in wi' thee,' shouted she.

The door was pushed open wider, but the incomer seeing some one else beside his aunt in the kitchen, hung back shyly.

'He!' cried his aunt, derisively, 'come in wi' thee. What's tha got to be scar'd on!'

'He needn't be scar'd o' me,' said Iphis, simply.

It was the blacksmith's apprentice. Iphis Cowlamb might speak with apparent self-possession, but a flush of colour suffused her face, and some interest shone in her eyes. As

for him, he scarcely had courage to meet those wide open eyes with his own. But he did not know how his garrulous aunt had been exciting interest for him in the breast of the farmer's daughter.

‘Here, sithee,’ cried the hospitable Mrs. Towse, affection for her departed sister stimulating her. She pushed a plate towards him, on which reposed a huge curd cheesecake, currants studding it, as many black eyes in its lemon face as Argus had. Mrs. Towse had a serious notion that the lad never got anything nice and toothsome, and the pastry would have given a dyspeptic the horrors.

‘I arn’t hungry,’ said he, shamefacedly.

‘Boo, eat it up, or thou needn’t bring me any o’ thy duds to fettle up. Here is a sup o’ beer left i’ th’ pitcher to wesh it down wi’.’

The beer was of the palest tint, home-brewed, sweet, and washy; not anything like the sharp ales of the reader’s imagination. The garthman kept two of the lads in the

house; he had so much bacon a year, so many stone of potatoes, and he had his modicum of malt; but the brewing was not conducted on scientific principles. As Towse remarked sometimes, 'A fellow might burst but he'd niver git drunk on their beer.'

'Joel's knocked ower,' said Ephraim, finding his voice.

'He's weared hissen out,' said Mrs. Towse.

'It's dirty work—blacksmith's,' said Iphis.

'Yis, 'm,' said Ephraim, deferentially.

Iphis was fain to laugh, not at Ephraim's deference, but at being dubbed 'm.'

'I mun be going, Mrs. Towse,' said she.

'I mun go an' all,' said Ephraim, but without the slightest intention of being bold. Iphis Cowlamb went out of the house first, Ephraim hard after her, but he kept behind her. At a gate they were about to take separate paths. Iphis turned and spoke.

'Which way were you going, Ephraim?'



‘Top o’ th’ wheat close.’

‘There’s no pad.’

‘No, but it’s a near cut——’

‘Thou moant let faither catch thee. Thou’ll ha’ to git ower a hedge, and he is particular about his hedges.’

‘Maybe I’d better go round.’

‘Maybe thou hed.’

A mischievous twinkle lit up her face, but he took her warning seriously. She came to a stand and looked at him ; the expression on his face was solemn and concerned. He thought she would doubtless believe that he made a practice of trespassing over wheat and forbidden fields ; he was not aware of Cow-lamb’s strictness. While she was speaking she scanned his face closely. Actually he had dimples ; they were not manifest when he was speaking, but only when his lips were closed. But under all this solemnity of visage there lurked a dash of something that made her heart jump. If she could only tantalise him until he overstepped his shyness and fear of



her! It was her father being so well off that overawed him, she thought. She trembled lest her position should frighten wooers away. She wanted a sweetheart she could like, not some hard-headed suitor with his mind wondering what Father Cowlamb would give her. The best fellows would be frightened of her dreadful matter-of-fact father. But she would have a sweetheart if she defied everybody. She was getting old enough. She wondered if Ephraim would ever find courage to kiss her. She trembled at the very thought, but there was a tremulous pleasure in the thought. No, she could scarcely suffer him to go so far on so short an acquaintance. But Ephraim was a shy fellow. Her grandfather was. She had heard her grandmother say that her sweetheart had never ventured to kiss her all the years they were courting, and then very timidly after they were wed.

‘He’s a gallas ’un,’ Iphis decided to herself; ‘them shy fellows are allus the worst.’

He was now in advance of her, looking

neither to the right nor to the left nor behind him, but staring straight ahead, feeling himself out of place and awkward. Where she was bold, he was most shamefaced.

Even when couples have decided to walk out together, the lad walks a few paces in advance, his hands carefully stowed in his coat pockets. He rolls from side to side, content to hear the lass hurrying behind, with maybe her bonnet awry or at the back of her head. Little conversation can be carried on, and all the female has to think about is not to let the distance between them increase. The desire to keep company is mutual and understood. By-and-by he will have courage to meet her eyes, and bear with her elbow in his ribs. Ephraim was most constrained; he would have wished to step out, only it seemed a discourtesy. It seemed to him, too, that he had been a terrible time absent from the shop; not that that troubled him much—only it was as well to keep clear of ‘blowings up.’

They reached the field gate, and by the

side of it was a stile. Generally Farmer Cow-lamb kept this gate padlocked, but this year the field was fallow. While Ephraim was unhasping the gate she climbed the stile and sat upon the rail. Ephraim stood with a three-quarters aspect to the girl. He did not exactly turn his back upon her, but looked at her over his shoulder. He had scarcely the courage to look her in the face. He could not get over her parentage and position.

‘What a shy owd lad!’ exclaimed she, maliciously.

Her sally brought no response, only the rich blood mounted under Ephraim’s ruddy skin.

Her eyes were full of laughter; bright sparks seemed to dance in the pupils; her lips curved with innocent malice. She moved her position, and Ephraim somehow seemed to realise that she was nearer to him.

‘If ye don’t speak, I’ll pull your hair.’

Was ever such a backward swain! She straightened herself, and looked as if she meant what she said, and further mischief.

Ephraim's diffidence gradually melted away ; a faint smile crept into his face—he was not afraid of feminine vengeance. It was a caprice of the farmer's daughter. She would never look at *him*.

There was silence a moment longer. Their eyes met and as suddenly fell. It was as if some tacit understanding was arrived at. He became bolder; a new hope stirred in him; he could feel his heart beat pit-a-pat, thickening the utterance of his tongue. To her it was full of the music of first love and fancy.

‘I seed you yesterday!’

‘I seed *you* yesterday!’ echoed she.

‘When you was milking.’

‘No, afore; galloping our young horse.’

‘It was fresh. I could hardlins hold him.’

‘Let father nobbut see you galloping it.’

‘Shall you go milkin’ to-night—by your sen?’ inquired he, huskily, a little appalled with his own daring.

‘What’s that got to do wi’ you, Ephraim?’ said she, sternly.

‘I’d knaw,’ apologised he, awkwardly balancing himself on his heels, with the gate for his firm friend. He coughed to clear himself and to explain. ‘I mud be there, if thou went by thysen.’

‘We’ll see.’ It was ambiguous, but its meaning was plain enough to him. He had become so bold, he had rolled himself along on his heels until he was so near she became apprehensive.

‘Get away,’ she cried, making great feint of struggling away. He withdrew his arm and retreated a little, somewhat disconcerted. He felt that he had been bold. He had made a fool of himself. The farmer would hear how he had been ‘going on.’ She would tell him, maybe. He stood looking very crestfallen indeed.

‘I hadn’t going to let *thou* kiss me, thou needn’t think;’ indignation ruling to the comma, relenting to the semicolon. She was deeply regretting that he had not succeeded after all, that she was so strong and lusty as

to be able to hold her own. She felt indignant with him, because he was so easily rebuffed. 'Off ye go, Ephraim.'

Ephraim opened the gate, obediently. He had not proceeded many steps when she cried after him—'I say!'

Ephraim stopped and turned.

'Never mind. Nothing.'

She sat on her perch and watched him descend the hill. She laughed to herself most whimsically. She laughed to think how easy after all it was to be able to obtain a sweetheart. He had meant to kiss her. If he hadn't ventured on such a thing so soon—the colour rose on her face. She came into the lane, her eyes following the head and shoulders of the descending figure. Ephraim turned to look back, but, seeing his movement was observed, quickly recovered himself. She stood a moment, then turned in at the green gate which opened towards her father's house.

Farmer Cowlamb and his wife were at dinner. Christopher Swallow, a Willowby

jobber, had come up to bargain, and was the farmer's guest.

'Will you have a bit o' meat now, Mister Swallow?' asked Mrs. Cowlamb.

'Howd on, missis; maybe Mester Swallow 'll have this bit o' pudding. If he doesn't, awiver, I will.'

Mr. Swallow no doubt felt that he could not express a wish for more pudding after the farmer had thus signified unsatiated predilection. Mr. Swallow, with downcast eyes, held his plate at an angle with one hand and industriously scraped it with the other, Mr. and Mrs. Cowlamb watching him with some interest.

'Now, then, mester, will ye ha' this bit?'

'No, thankee,' said Mr. Swallow, with cheerful decision.

'Then I will,' said the farmer, jocularly. 'I mun as well take the dish, missis, and scrape it out. Wilful waste makes woful want, eh, Swallow?' The farmer chuckled as he took the dish on his plate.



Hearing a foot the farmer looked behind him, and, seeing Iphis, spoke with some concern.

‘Heigh, missis, is there ony for her?’

‘I put a bit in the oven for her,’ replied Mrs. Cowlamb, quietly.

‘That’ll do,’ said the farmer, reassured.

‘Wherever hes t’ been, not to git home by dinner?’ inquired Mrs. Cowlamb, complainingly.

‘At Towse’s.’

‘Thou’s strange and fond o’ Towse’s,’ said Mrs. Cowlamb, disparagingly, her voice thin and cracked.

‘Why, ye see, Mrs. Cowlamb,’ interposed Mr. Swallow, unctuously, ‘there’s lots o’ baens. I’ll uphold it she’s fond o’ company.’

‘Who’s that thou wast talking to in the lane?’ asked Mrs. Cowlamb, still detractingly.

It was unusual for her to look at husband or daughter when talking to them. Only to strangers did she accord this courtesy. Hectoring the servant, which she was mostly



engaged in, was never carried on at close quarters. Mrs. Cowlamb generally stood in the pantry or in the kitchen when the girl was in the scullery, and *vice versâ*, at such time raising her voice, modulating it when she wished to pursue the commentary thereon.

Her mother's question did not disconcert Iphis.

‘A chap!’ said Iphis, laconically.

‘A chap! What chap?’ asked the farmer, with a mouthful.

‘Ephraim!’ replied Iphis, impatiently, knowing that her face was now red, her father having become interested.

‘Oh, Ephraim! Mister Ephraim would look better getting on with his work.’

‘He’d done.’

‘Done! Then he ought to make haste back. He’s not good to much, I warrant him.’

Iphis would have retorted had not Mr. Swallow been there. She did not want Mr. Swallow to speak for her again. He might

though be on the adverse side, knowing that Ephraim was not of much weight. Iphis in her mind had now a supreme pity for Ephraim's poverty, his dearth of friends in his neophancy.

'Now, Mister Cowlamb, am ee to hev them gimbers?' said Swallow rising, taking his hat and stick.

'At my figure.'

'Nay, I can't; I really can't do it.'

'Fetch the gin, missis.'

'Nay, nay, don't, Mrs. Cowlamb; I can't stop; I mun be on—now, Mr. Cowlamb?'

'Sixty-three!'

'And what luck?'

'Luck?'

'Say a fi'-pun note,' suggested the jobber, holding out his hand to strike bargain.

'Nay, my lad; thou'd nearly hev 'em at thy awn price.'

'I'm sorry we can't bargain,' said the jobber resignedly, his arm falling and getting nearer the door.

‘Now, Mister Cowlamb?’ persuasive and with fresh vigour.

The farmer shook his head.

The jobber passed through the door, then returned, but without showing himself, cried loudly, ‘I’ll take them culls<sup>1</sup> on ye at your awn price.’

‘I’ll consither on it; I’ll see to-morrow how things are going.’

‘They’ll be down to-morrow, Mr. Cowlamb.’

‘Thou s’ll ha’ first chance. Awiver I weant bargain to-day.’

‘Thank you, Mister Cowlamb. Good-day.’

‘Swallow!’ shouted the farmer. The jobber again put his head in at the outer door, replying eagerly,

‘Yes, sir.’

‘Thou can ha’ th’ culls.’

‘Nay-a, I shan’t wi’out t’others.’

‘Oh, very well,’ returned Cowlamb, carelessly.

<sup>1</sup> Inferior ones.

The jobber stood a few moments, but, hearing nothing more encouraging, took his departure, in his soul much incensed to think that he had not got the better of Farmer Cowlamb.

‘So thou wast sweetheartin’,’ said the farmer to his girl, mischievously.

‘Nay, I wasn’t,’ said Iphis, strenuously ; which meant ‘Yes, I was,’ if he liked to take it so.

‘Get out wi’ thee. What dost ee want to be talking to chaps for?’

‘I s’ll ha’ to hev a sweetheart some day.’

Iphis spoke aggrievedly.

‘Heigh, heigh, I’ll find thee one,’ said her father, with cheerful confidence, ‘an’ not a bunjugs like that blacksmith’s lad. I’ll find thee a sweetheart, niver fear.’

But somehow Iphis did not respond cheerfully to such an assurance.

## CHAPTER 4.

## GRACE.

IPHIS COWLAMB was a singer in the ugly little Dissenting Chapel at Willowby. She sat with other young girls in the 'singing loft,' a gallery just behind the pulpit. They occupied a very prominent position, and faced the whole of the congregation. Iphis was sometimes mischievous, exciting her neighbours to laughter, making peculiar remarks on the head of the preacher below. If he happened to be a local, familiarity with his person and traits perhaps fostered more fun and liberty. A bald patch was sure to excite risibilities. As their fancy chose to take it, it was a face without features and expression. Sometimes

the congregation were scandalised with the singers' behaviour. Farmer Cowlamb would look reprovingly across at Iphis, but he never had the heart to scold her. 'They're young,' he would say; 'they'll be steadier when they get owder.' But had not Iphis been among them he would have had something caustic for the jades, and he would have stayed waiting outside to deliver it. Farmer Cowlamb had soon got to be an important personage in 'society,' as represented in Willowby.

The young preachers had peculiar and gracious smiles for the country belles above them. Mounting the pulpit steps their faces were directed towards the singers; it was their only opportunity. But their unctuous smiles and tender glances were principally aimed at Iphis Cowlamb. She was, indeed, worth looking after. But, as yet, she was little impressed with any one of them. Else it was not considered a bad step socially, marrying a travelling preacher. Some of the other girls

were daughters of small farmers in a comfortable way, but Iphis was generally regarded as one for whom there would be a fortune. One swain, finding Iphis cold, turned to another, a well-favoured lass with a parent considered 'warm.' He was regarded with some favour, but papa, one of the elders, so far forgot his principles and his religion as to chase his would-be son-in-law from his house with the carving-knife when he discovered the minister's true drift. The young girls were not the only occupants of the gallery. Some staid men sat at one end, behind were ranged musicians with clarionets, fiddles, deep bass, and a horn; on forms by the wall the more promising of the Sunday scholars. As all sang in the chapel, following the girls' voices and the instrumental music, there was a tolerable volume of sound surging within the four walls. When the single door was opened it came out into the open air with fervid abruptness, as when one removes a finger from a closed ear. In summer, when the windows

were open, out in the fields the effect was most pleasant and suggestive.

Now, a great exertion was being made to bring more professing members into the body. Week-day revival services were being held. Laughter was mingled with tears, tears led to astonishing outbreaks, prostration, appeal. One man alone was able to console and bind, that was the exhorter, and at the penitent form. His auxiliaries paced up and down the length of the pews, keenly scrutinising every face, urging submission and repentance in low and earnest tones. Indeed, Farmer Cowlamb took his turn ; he had been a leading member of the body here and at Snailhorn for so many years that he occupied this position almost by courtesy.

The Reverend Peter Macwhortle, whose name betokened nativity in the North, was here in Willowby by special invitation. He was a man of the people, some said a collier when he was young. Peter's discourse at its earliest stage was enlivened with



the broadest anecdote and the broadest application. It went beyond humour, although his speech and his manner gave all he said that character in the ears of his auditors. He strove to create mirth, he waited for the broad grins on his hearers' faces, their hearty laughter, then the transition to the antithesis was more quickly reached.

Nightly Farmer Cowlamb, with wife and daughter, attended the little chapel. Some exultation that success crowned Peter's efforts was felt by the former. But a greater thankfulness took its place in Cowlamb's bosom when he saw his own daughter tearfully rise in the gallery to appear in the body of the chapel. No hesitation marked her progress, no fear of public comment ; she cast herself upon her knees by the side of those who had already responded to Mr. Macwhortle's thunderous appeal.

It seemed as if her response was the signal for successive penitents, hitherto wavering, and all young. Mr. Macwhortle knew the

condition of the fair penitent. He had accepted the hospitality of Farmer Cowlamb, and was a guest at the farmhouse. He had expressed a wish that Iphis should get religion under him. It was at evening prayer, and the admission startled Iphis then, as also her father's fervent 'Amen.' Mr. Macwhortle observed her submission with some satisfaction. His eyes ranged over the young heads, and he did not forget to improve the occasion. Amidst the group who were weeping and crying out in their frenzied excitement was one whose figure and head seemed familiar to the farmer. Cowlamb was some few moments before he could reconcile his knowledge to the traits and carriage which arrested his attention. At length the head was raised, and by the dark-brown curls the farmer discovered it to be that of the blacksmith's apprentice, Ephraim Sparrow.

A certain consternation seemed to take possession of the farmer, but he overcame it when something from the pulpit called for

deep attention from all. Cowlamb reached his pew, and sat with a serious face, assenting with implicit faith to Mr. Macwhortle's views and theories of futurity, his stern realities and tender mercies, his literal renderings of sacred writ. But the farmer was only human, he could not help his mind from being concerned with things mundane, nor his eyes from roving towards the end of the penitent form, but some one now blocked Ephraim Sparrow from his view, and he could see only a portion of Iphis's head. He did not connect the two, but he felt vaguely perplexed.

Had these two observed each other?

Not until the brown locks revealed their possessor to Iphis's father did Iphis discover that Ephraim had followed his idol. When she looked up she detected him regarding her furtively. Her eyes were tear-stained, detracting from her good looks she knew; but the lad's face, with no tears to mar it, from a half-ashamed seriousness changed, a comic light danced in his eyes, and she could not

maintain the gravity of her own demeanour ; her lips parted with a smile. Then, recollecting herself, she bent her face down, forced a frown upon it, as some remonstrance and self-reproach against such levity at such a time ; but, to her confusion—horrible it seemed to her—all her religion seemed to have as suddenly gone out of her. Was Ephraim a hypocrite, taking his cue from her ? She began to make sundry comparisons, not favourable to the preacher, on his voice, on his attitude. She even went so far as to believe that Mr. Macwhortle was only giving his best work for good money. Her father said the labourer wasn't worth his hire if he didn't ' addle ' it. Mr. Macwhortle was conscientious ; if his work was irksome to him, he was doing it honestly. Perhaps it had got to be like an old song with him. Iphis thought he did not look as if he really felt all he said himself. He was fat ; his thin locks encircled a ruddy, oily face ; he had a short neck and a scratchy beard, his voice was

coarse. his clothes ill-fitting and snuff-besprinkled and flavoured. She began to feel ashamed that she had been so impulsive—she had made herself quite conspicuous. However, she could not run back now. She began to be impatient—she sighed for the close of Mr. Macwhortle's threats and promises. At last he read two lines of the hymn—

God, the offended God Most High,  
Ambassadors to rebels sends.

Oh! the interminable handshaking at the chapel door after all was over. The entreaty to those who showed signs of going to stay prayer-meeting. Such hearts of flint had to face eyes of reproach, hands relaxed; there was less cordiality when determination to breathe freer air, to leave such surcharged excitement, was not to be overcome. The preacher thundered their fate, and the perverse ones retreated like craven curs, believing him, either half regretting the hour had not come or filled with a spirit of resentful antagonism.

Iphis was glad to be relieved. She rose

from her knees and made her way to her father's pew. She had won the sympathy of the old people. Her father held the pew door open for her, she, passing him, felt herself ingrate, hypocrite, worse.

Ephraim Sparrow stayed, that she saw. But never once while the exciting half-hour lasted did she detect him other than grave and downcast. Her father almost expected some outspoken manifestation from her. Some of the converts were vociferous. But Iphis's lips continued closed. His own were free in ejaculation. At a telling sentence Mr. Macwhortle paused for the antistrophe; sometimes it came from fervent lips with bewildering contradiction. But then the hypercritical were conspicuous by their absence.

There was a press at the chapel door. Those who had succeeded in getting out still hung around like moths at a candle, waiting for those who had had sufficient grace to stay. The young must be encouraged with sympathy and the outspread palms of the elders. With

others, Ephraim Sparrow was surrounded, his hand grasped over and over again. Perhaps Ephraim was overwhelmed when the Reverend Mr. Macwhortle extended his chubby hand. Indeed Ephraim was so abashed and confused he found himself the next moment grasping the hand of Farmer Cowlamb, and the farmer's face an inexplicable enigma to him. Then Mr. Macwhortle took the side of Mrs. Cowlamb, and, with the farmer on the other, Iphis was pushed aside or had to give way. Looking round, Farmer Cowlamb was astounded to behold the blacksmith's apprentice, Ephraim Sparrow, in the act of taking Iphis's hand. Farmer Cowlamb was never nearer making the exclamation which stood with him in the place of an imprecation. No doubt he was restrained by the presence of Mr. Macwhortle, the knowledge that the lad was now of the elect ; still, Ephraim should keep his place. But the farmer's movement had also caused Mr. Macwhortle to turn too. He regarded the youth and maiden with bombastic approval



—ignorant of the status of Ephraim—and rolled out the phrase, ‘Young men and maidens praising the Lord.’

The farmer groaned inwardly, and turned of a ‘goosecoat,’ as he mentally put it. It was an encouragement. Mr. Macwhortle erred no doubt through ignorance. The farmer could not well complain, but he felt very much disturbed. All Willowby would be agog; the village would champ over Ephraim’s sudden conversion and equally sudden acquired arrogance; and he, Farmer Cowlamb, would come in for a share of foolish conjecture.

Cowlamb could not refrain from occasional glimpses over his shoulder. The farmer’s body swayed to each foot, at once indicating that he had followed the plough, and this trait was more noticeable when he was weary or bothered. He saw that Ephraim Sparrow was still with Iphis. Both had serious faces. He would have liked to overhear their conversation, and thus have satisfied himself that



Ephraim was confining himself to topics not secular.

Mr. Macwhortle continued rolling out his platitudes with undiminished fervour, until Cowlamb felt in a state of exasperation.

‘Labourers are allus sca’ce at this time o’ year,’ said Mrs. Cowlamb.

‘There are labourers always wanted for the Lord’s vineyard,’ said Mr. Macwhortle.

‘We’ve had a fine owd smouthering,’ said Cowlamb, referring to the full chapel; ‘but there’s a many more mud ha’ been there.’

‘Ah,’ sighed the preacher, ‘a cold heart and a warm fireside keeps a many away from chapel.’

This was Mr. Macwhortle’s pet phrase. But Cowlamb could not rid himself of his torture. What, with his uncertain walk—to which though his wife was accustomed, accommodating her walk to his—his futile attempts to look behind him, to listen, and his inattentive mind, he jolted so extraordinarily against

his wife that now and again she forced Mr. Macwhortle off the path.

‘Mr. Macwhortle knows the young man whose name is on the plan, that’s coming in place of Mr. Greenwood at Moortown,’ murmured Mrs. Cowlamb.

‘His mother is a Moortown person,’ said Mr. Macwhortle; ‘a pious woman. Her husband was in the ministry. After a powerful meeting and gathering in of souls the Lord took him. Poor man, he was walking home, a long distance, a lonely road, and he was not found for some time. Visitation of God—indeed, it was, my dear m’em. A man worthy of the vocation unto which he was called.’

‘Ah!’ assented the farmer, curtly, the balance of his mind overthrown.

‘His wife is a Dorcas of our body. It is her faith that she has seen her husband in the spirit mair than once; that he directs her in the way of salvation.’

‘Indeed,’ said Mrs. Cowlamb in a lachry-

mose key ; ‘ poor woman, it must ha’ been a trial to her. Her son’s a young man ? ’

‘ Young in years and ministry, but, like Saul, full of zeal and fervour. He would have gone out a missionary ; it was revealed to him that his mother was aged, he could not leave her. With her husband, indeed, it was “ the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.” The widow receives sustenance from the superannuation fund. Her husband was an old and faithful minister of the Word.’

‘ Next Sunday ’ll be the first time the young man preaches in the circuit,’ Farmer Cowlamb at last found opportunity to say.

‘ You are right, my dear sir. I hope he will carry on the good work already begun under my poor superintendence.’ Mr. Macwhortle’s eyes turned upwards with pious modesty.

Here the farmer had to look behind him again. Ephraim Sparrow was still walking at Iphis’s side. They were laughing. That was horrible. But Ephraim Sparrow, quick

to note the movements of the trio before them, had observed the farmer turn his head. Ephraim's face became grave, he met Cowlamb's critical eye with assurant seriousness which almost maddened the enduring farmer. Cowlamb wondered what the youthful couple behind were laughing at. Perhaps he would not have laughed with them had he known.

Iphis saw her father's head repeatedly turn, but not the slightest idea entered into hers that walking thus with Ephraim Sparrow was in any way reprehensible. Ephraim had a good-looking face, had a fair suit of clothes on his back ; in his work-a-day suit no one could say he was ugly, and smoke and grime, one knows, are never conducive to appearance.

She had been a little surprised at Ephraim shaking hands with her father and Mr. Macwhortle ; her hand went out almost unconsciously, and then she dragged it from him saucily. But Ephraim did not look vexed or perturbed ; he seemed to have acquired a grave confidence. She did not feel surprised to

find him walking by her side for a few moments. Then she looked at him with some pertness, and he spoke, as if ignoring what he knew was the tenor of her thoughts.

‘Mr. Macwhortle preached a fine sermon, didn’t he?’

‘Maybe he did,’ she retorted. There was a tinge of suspicion in voice and look. ‘You was brought in.’

‘And you was an’ all, wasn’t you?’ questioned he. She fancied there was that in his voice to imply that if she said she wasn’t he would not be so sure of himself.

‘I don’t know,’ she replied. ‘I wished efter I hadn’t gone up. I don’t know what I shall do. I don’t feel somehow as if I hed got religion efter all. What would you do, Ephraim, if you was me?’

‘Keep going while ee did git it.’

Iphis looked at him incredulously.

‘No. If you felt so just now, should you wish you hedn’t gone up?’

‘No.’

‘Why?’

‘Because I shouldn’t ha’ gone up if you hedn’t.’

‘Ephraim!’ She gave a cry of horrified surprise, but for all that was a little taken with such devotion.

‘Then you’re no more converted than I am?’ Her eyes opened wide as she came to this startling conviction.

‘I don’t think I am,’ he acknowledged.

‘Whativer would father and Mr. Mac-whortle say?’ pondered she with great simplicity, but with some secret satisfaction. They would be horrified. Her thin voice gave her question the character of that of a child’s. She looked into Ephraim’s face almost breathless. But in his eyes there was only the look an animal may have, say an intelligent dog, in whom some comical rascality has been seen through, and he knows you know his depravity.

‘What made you think of going up, Ephraim? Now speak the truth,’ demanded

she, with a gesture of command that was far from haughty.

‘Why—I thowt I couldn’t be far wrong if I did just exactly as you did.’

He laughed wickedly, and she laughed too. Just then Farmer Cowlamb turned his head and caught them before the fit was over. They became grave again.

‘I wouldn’t ha’ father and Mr. Macwhortle know for all the world. What ’ll folk think to you, Ephraim?’

‘I s’ll keep on. It’s a dele better being religious than not. I fon that out already. I niver shook hands wi’ so many folks i’ my life afore as I done to-day. Nobody bud my faither iver shook hands wi’ me as I can remember. Nobody ud iver do me a turn but her at the farm up yonder, and they so many baens I feel ashamed to take owt up to her. Blamed if I don’t think iverybody was deead agean me, and I’m no worse than the rest o’ folks that I knows on.’

There had come to her a hazy impression

that after all Ephraim Sparrow was not the innocent hobbledehoy his bearing towards her during their first interview had led her to believe. He had tried to snatch a kiss. But a woman is always attracted by a rascally man. She is fascinated with his contempt for beaten paths. A woman counts much upon her power. If a rascal tells her that under her guidance he will mend his ways, what sacrifice is there she will not make for him? Ephraim was placing himself in her hands to be moulded and invested with some social rank. He had been left to his own devices, with no one to direct him. There was abundant excuse for him. It showed how frank he was, making no scruple of avowing the impulse which moved him to make a public exhibition of himself, all because she had done so. But his unvarnished statement of his friendlessness won her more than all besides. Iphis's nature was pre-eminently generous. He was a waif and friendless, and fast sinking into a slough of



despond, crediting every one with a stony and inaccessible heart.

‘I would ‘do you a bit o’ mendin’ afore you should be be’t.’ She stammered and blushed, placing herself a little further apart from him, and looking at him from under her parasol with modest, diffident looks. ‘I—I mended a pair o’ your stockings that day you was at the garthman’s.’

Ephraim stood stock still for a moment and did not speak. No, he could not speak for surprise. Did he hear aright? Was he dreaming? She stopped too and laughed—not an over-confident laugh. His heart rose, it was laden with an amount of grateful feeling he could not find expression for; greater he knew than the occasion demanded, but it was more because she had expressed herself willing to repeat the service. He looked so serious the laughter went out of her face. She began to be afraid that her conduct had been reprehensible.

‘Pshoo,’ excused she, ‘it was nowt.

Thou'd do as much i' thy way for me. Bud I didn't do it for thee altogether ; I did it for Mrs. Towse, she seemed so hard laid on. I an't nayther sick nor sorry.'

'I couldn't do as much for thee,' said he, earnestly. 'I'd know how I'd set about it.' There was more thought and honesty in Ephraim from this moment. She detected the ring.

'I moant stop,' said Iphis, looking ahead ; 'sithee, they're at the town end.'

'Nay, I'll go no further.'

'Well, say "Good afternoon,"' said she with a little gesture of fond reproof.

'Good afternoon,' answered he, absently.

He did not move from the position in which she left him. Ephraim was not one given to thought ; his hands sank deep in his pockets ; he seemed as if he could scarcely keep his balance. So profound was his rumination, he at last found himself in the hedge, and was brought round by some girding thorns.

He began to realise that he was placing

himself in a position open to criticism. What other fellow in the village had dared to look at *her*? The wheelwright's apprentice—his father was in a two-horse farm; the shoemaker's—his father had promised to give him twenty pounds to start for himself. It had only been fun and frolic on his part, a natural sequence after the meeting with Iphis at Towse's. His march to the penitent form was a sudden impulse he could now scarcely account for. He began to think that he must be in earnest, but felt a little alarmed at the prospect of having to keep up the hand-shaking. He was scarcely confident whether his profession was strong enough to carry him through; whether this profession of grace went hand in hand with courtship; whether Farmer Cowlamb would consider such profession privileging him to sweetheart his daughter. Then there were his old companions; he rather winced—he had been accustomed to retort and go further, at any taunt or jeer. But then they would gape to see him walking Iphis Cowlamb

out after chapel. She had never given them so much as a glance, they all felt at arm's length. He set off at last in the way Iphis Cowlamb had gone, but she and her friends were now well out of sight. Three roads met, and at the angle of intersection stood the old thatched smithy where he worked. A knot of his old companions stood there, but they had not a word for him ; yet he fancied they eyed him with some respect. Evidently they had been discussing the day's doings. He went on. He would have liked to join them, but was scarcely determined whether consorting with those long exhorted, but still remiss, was consonant with his new profession.

## CHAPTER 5.

## CANVASSED.

THE farmer had waited for Iphis at the intersecting roads. She could tell by her father's expression that he was not over well pleased with her. As soon as she showed signs of coming up with them he led his party on again. But when she reached them he never turned his head to speak to her. He did not know what to say to her, how to couch reproof; language with him was not a medium for varnishing his thoughts. Had she been a lad there would have been no difficulty. But she was a girl, and he had never thwarted her, never been stern with her. He had always so impressed his boys and led them that they had come with him to regard her as a delicate doll

to be carefully considered. Cowlamb was thoroughly out of his depth. He felt that he could not entrust any delicate mission to his wife, he had long ago discerned that mother and daughter were far from being one in sympathy; his wife would 'nag,' and that would perhaps precipitate matters. Opposition Cowlamb was shrewd enough to know was one of the worst tactics to employ against a woman. He cogitated whether, ignoring what had passed, closing his eyes would not be the surer policy. The lad would have his day and the affair blow over. It could not have gone so very far, but he could not forget that Ephraim was the 'chap' Iphis was talking to in the lane a week ago. This was not reassuring.

Iphis noted her father's disturbance, not so Mr. Macwhortle. Cowlamb was not very attentive to his guest, the canny north country man. There was a nervous quiver about the farmer's lower lip, which protruded more than usual. It was temper. There was some viciousness in the expression of his eyes. He

walked on eyeing things obliquely. Mr. Macwhortle was quite unconscious of any such turmoil; but that is not to say he had not observed peculiarities of temperament in the bucolic mind, and oddities in Farmer Cow-lamb. Mr. Macwhortle reasoned to himself that the farmer's absent mind and wandering thoughts were but new phases, and, naturally a *bon vivant*, he was looking forward to the well-spread table, the singing of the kettle, the fragrance of the steam from the tea-cups, the luscious cream and sparkling lump sugar. The comforts of an assured possession of future bliss may be a theme worthy for an apostle to extemporise upon, but to latter-day saints creature comforts are not contemptible—indeed, pioneers find wholesome quarters after their toil is over. Mr. Macwhortle took his pleasant places as natural appendices to his apologues.

Iphis, though not afraid, nor disconcerted at her reception, awaited with a shade of concern the explanation that must come after her

father's show of compressed and confined temper. But it did not come that night. Cowlamb's attitude puzzled wife and daughter, and even Mr. Macwhortle. Cowlamb was jerky, and loud, and emphatic. It at last dawned on Mr. Macwhortle's mind that the farmer's mind was unaccountably askew. Mr. Macwhortle was rather crest-fallen the following morning at the farmer's fuss and exhilaration. It almost seemed as if Brother Cowlamb wished to get him off. Indeed, it was so. It was with grim satisfaction this odd-mooded man beheld Hosea bringing up horse and trap to convey Mr. Macwhortle to Moortown railway station. The women felt it a relief. They could divest themselves of company manners and apparel, and, untrammelled, get to their household duties. The servant girl had churned the butter an hour ago ; it lay in the cold water ready for making up, yellow and firm and sweet. There was a scent of butter-milk in the kitchen, of triturated carrots ; the utensils were there all ready for Iphis's hands,



and Iphis was impatient at being so delayed. As soon as the wheels of the trap moved on Iphis retreated indoors, leaving her parents to wave Mr. Macwhortle parting adieus. Then began Iphis's attention to her business ; tucking up her sleeves she commenced to work up her butter. How nice she was in her judgment of salt, how deft in her method of weighing, working the butter into rolls, laying it in pounds on a second board ! The patterned roller left in relief a design not Pompeian, nor Louis Quatorze, but a curious compound of the vagaries of old potters and the rude talent of a savage. Anyhow it was quite in character. She contemplated the array for a moment with some satisfaction, finally carrying off each successive board into the cool dairy, there to repose on the cold brick gantry.

When Farmer Cowlamb re-entered the house his manner was taciturn and ungracious. He sat by the fireside in the best kitchen, replying monosyllabically to his wife's platitudes on Mr. Macwhortle. She

was full of pride in having had so distinguished a person as a guest. She was brimful of his sayings and thoughts, of her impressions of him, of echoes of his *bon mots*. What with the depressing sameness of her voice and the pat of Iphis's utensils, he soon became wearied of it all. If Cowlamb had been a rational man he would have solaced himself with a pipe of tobacco. But he was not a great smoker. In his young days he had been abstemious with luxuries. Now he was better off he kept a box of cigars in the house for company, but he had not the jaunty style of one accustomed to a Havana when he attempted to smoke one. Cowlamb at last remembered that he had to go into the village to see the wheelwright, a man who was necessary to him, a good worker, but for whom Cowlamb had often much sarcasm, because he was not good like himself at early rising.

It was a morning in August, a dense but genial fog having risen from or settled down

upon the earth, so completely defying the warm summer air as to give one the idea of an October or November morning slipped in by mistake, but eventually to succumb to the fierce rays of an irresistible sun. A morning that brings the corn to the ripening, and the farmer to the conclusion that he must think of bestirring himself, or have his corn shake in the ear before it is cut. Farmer Cowlamb paused to look at one of his own fields changing to a glorious russet yellow, stalks bowed down with heavy heads and swaying slightly without wind. His eyes ranged further; a field of a neighbour's, exciting some sardonic humour in his mind—a field of pulse crimson with poppies, here and there though invaded with patches of yellow, from his point of view equally disgraceful, great lank 'ketlocks.' It had no beauty for him; it was a crying testimony against a slovenly farmer.

At the wheelwright's there was some conversation being carried on—the wheelwright at his chamber window, the blacksmith below.

Everything was askew this morning. There was the sluggard but just rising. Early birds had partaken of their worms already. Cowlamb thought it was no wonder some people found it difficult to make any headway in the world.

‘Did ye hear Peter, then?’ the blacksmith was shouting. The blacksmith, whose surname was abbreviated to Brad and Braddy, was seated on his haunches under the shade of an elder tree hanging over some white palings.

‘Heigh, he’s a rum owd fellow,’ responded the wheelwright—who was Searb familiarly—now visible to Cowlamb in his shirt.

‘What a mind he hes!’ said Brad, the blacksmith. He drew a heavy breath, overpowered with the conviction; ‘he does lip it out.’

‘Law, how melch it is!’ put in the wheelwright’s wife, in and out the house with her ashpan, cleaning up the fireside after fire-lighting.

‘It’s beautiful,’ said Brad, ecstatically.

‘I know ; ya and Searb wouldn’t be ower hot in a brick oven,’ she declared, irately.

‘Not if door warn’t shut,’ said the incorrigible Brad. ‘Law, how ya folks lig i’ bed,’ he observed, looking up at the chamber window.

‘I was at work till half-past twelve,’ said Mrs. Searb, excusing herself.

‘Heigh,’ criticised the blacksmith, ‘some folks niver can set to to do owt by daylight, thèy mun hev a lamp or a can’le lit. Ya could git up i’ th’ morning and do it, couldn’t ye?’

‘Bud I was ironin’ and one can’t fessen on work o’ that sort till the baens are safe i’ bed.’

‘Bed! heigh, bed! Somefolks git a dele ower much on’t ; natur nobbut wants five hours, wickedness ten.’

‘Well, we’ve hed eleven offenses,’ declared she, recklessly.

‘Oh law, ya’re bad, ya’re worse than I

took you to be. Will that sweetheart o' thine do me this little job afore he gits his break'ast.'

Happier the farmer would have been had he at that moment showed himself. But he stayed playing the part of eavesdropper. Hearing their appreciation of Mr. Macwhortle's labours, he had begun to feel better satisfied with his part in the work, namely, furthering the cause by having Mr. Macwhortle at his house. He had almost forgotten that his temper had been tried.

'Why, Ephraim's turned religious!' said the blacksmith.

'D'ye think he'll stand?'

'Nay, I'd knaw. Him and me are o' two sides at times. He's a shy lad till he gits used to folks, then there isn't a more mischievous.'

'Well, it's to be hoped he'll keep it. Bud they tell me he walked off wi' owd Cowlamb's dowter. Tst! it a'most takes one's breath away. That's a feather in his cap. What'll

the owd woman make on him? I seed him shak hands, and wi' the owd man an' all, and Ephraim was feart enow. Law, one would a'most think the worrld was coming to an end.'

'Make haste down wi' thee,' shouted the blacksmith, somewhat nettled at the fulsome admiration the wheelwright was exhibiting for Ephraim; 'I can't be standing here all day blathering wi' thee. Oh, here's Mester Cowlamb,' added the blacksmith, with cheerful humility, 'how are ye, sir?'

'As well i' health as temper,' retorted Cowlamb, thus showing to the blacksmith that he had heard their nonsense with but little pleasure. 'Hasn't carpenter got his first sleep ower?' added he, sourly.

'He's down, I think, Mester Cowlamb. They be strange folks to lig i' bed.'

'I wonder their eyes don't git bunged up.'

The farmer rode his white cob into the yard among the timber, the impotent farm implements, the chips, and other refuse. A



devious route he had to take. He shouted out impatiently—

‘Searb!’ and louder, ‘Searb!’

The wheelwright was heard shuffling into his boots, his wife’s voice, not in an undertone, urging expedition. Presently he emerged, and the farmer, twitting the somnolent wheelwright with some asperity, broached his business, and turned his cob’s head. Both men wished him good morning, to which he responded most ungraciously. He was filled with greater annoyance. Iphis’s name was already bandied about the village, linked too, with that of a ne’er-do-weel. He had always reckoned on his girl marrying a young fellow with a farm and substantial prospects. Her conduct was not likely to enhance her chances. He did not know how to nip the affair in the bud, but that it should be stopped before it went further he was determined. Before he would be beaten he would pack her off bag and baggage to Sam’s. Then the farmer groaned. Lately he had



been much troubled in his mind about Sam. Sam had shown signs of turning out unsteady. Sam had quarrelled with his wife, and now they were living apart. Sam had gone in for a fine dashing woman. But Sam's dashing wife had exasperated him. She was not prepared to take things in the same way as he had been used to see the women of his own family take them. She had tastes the matter-of-fact Sam did not appreciate, his temper culminated in some brutality—an attempt to crush her between the door and the jamb—and the terrified woman sought shelter at a neighbour's and originated scandal. Sam was prepared to eat humble pie, beg pardon, promise no more of such brutality. He was humiliated when he came to himself, cursed the drink which had excited him, her tongue which had incensed him; but for all that felt himself vile. Farmer Cowlamb professed never to believe that Sam had been so unmanly, both his lads had always been so good and kind and affectionate with Iphis. But

Cowlamb could perceive the heavy nature lay in both, if unroused and dormant. He could not hide it from himself now, that there had been occasions when he had had his misgivings about his lads. Their temper was stubborn and fierce as his own. Now Sam was drinking and the talk of the countryside, Snailhorn way. Cowlamb had gone over, but had only succeeded in checking Sam while he remained there. Then had come to him in some mysterious way after he had returned home, reports that Sam had broken loose again. Worse tales reached him, and Cowlamb was near on desperation. However highly Cowlamb might regard the efficacy of the work of such men as Mr. Macwhortle, there was no Macwhortle who could arrest Sam, he feared. Iphis *might* be his redemption, but Cowlamb hesitated sending her there, she never had had to contend with vice or weakness of that shape. Sam must take his chance, if Iphis would only behave herself at home.

Of her two brothers the younger was

Iphis's favourite. He was unmarried. She would have gone to him gladly. It had been discussed. She would have gone, but for her father's heart-hunger. But Sam—Iphis had thought very much of him, had a sisterly love for him, but the farmer could not keep all the evils tales from her. The mother was prone in her 'nattering' moods to dilate on Sam's evil courses. His housekeepers were not immaculate, or they left him in disgust. But if Cowlamb determined to send Iphis to Snailhorn, Mrs. Cowlamb would as soon think of flying as of opposing him.

So the farmer, as those who hope against the worst, waited. If matters got no further advanced, there was still room to hope that Iphis would think better of her giddiness and mend her ways.

## CHAPTER 6.

## POLICY.

ALAS for the congregations who sat under Mr. Macwhortle's successor! Alas for the poor woman who called Mr. Macwhortle's successor, son! Her boy, who was to tread in the footsteps of her husband, whose unpretentious memory still upheld her, a comfort to her, showed only too glaringly traces of the old Adam, caring too much for the vanities of the world, the raiment he should wear, what he ate, what he drank. What Mr. Macwhortle had planted he was to water. But the young minister was not a transcript of Paul's Apollos, no one could believe it, rather a 'giddy-whiffles,' possessed with desire to emulate a heathen character of similar name. He had

the afflatus, but his ardour and zeal could scarcely be confined by the elders within due bounds. He was so impetuous—he wished to enter strongholds before carrying the out-works. His first movement in a village was to organise his congregation into a battalion and storm it, singing through and back again to the square, ugly chapel. Pleasant to the ear came the hymns, sung with zest if not with excessive harmony and concord. Resolute, he pushed his nose the furthest forward in the line, singing louder than any, raising his hymn-book high, swaying it up and down with impressive sanctimoniousness. He wore spectacles, which quickly in invidious Willowby was set down to pride, and first gave the cue to an outlook for other traits of imperfections. His clothes were much too glossy, and their cut aped too much the Establishment—in old-world folks' eyes. Scandal at length got busy with him. It was commonly talked that his mother had remonstrated with him, would no longer tolerate him

because he would not discard rings. Why did he wear patent shoes, and walk on his tiptoes, if he were not vain of his white stockings?

But the young ladies of his congregation were scarcely so severe. The neat white tie, the spotlessness of his linen as contrasted with their brothers' and sweethearts' rough and tumbled dickies, made him a curled darling in their eyes, if they did sometimes irreverently poke fun at him. Unfortunately for him they had known him long before he entered the ministry, long before he had even 'got' religion. The body taking an interest in him, his indentures of apprenticeship had been cancelled, and he was lost to St. Crispin. Some, more bold than nice, did not hesitate to tease him about an old flame, cook in a gentleman's house; but he did not wince.

'Yes,' said he, 'with that girl it was like walking in paradise; her conversation was imbued with piety.'

If he was offended he did not show it, and was quite ready to accompany his teaser home,

and after tea return with her to the square chapel.

He preached there the first two Sundays ; afterwards he was to take his turn with the other ministers located at Moortown, local brethren filling up. Criticism did not meet him sharply at first ; people thought his prayers beautiful, only rather long. In course of time they palled.

‘ Pray short, pray quick, and to the point when people want to go home,’ remonstrated a deaf local brother not unduly irritated, but without a thought of irreverence.

Once let a community be stirred with the faintest whisper of disapproval, it is like a fuse. First one shook his head without speaking, then another shook his and was sorrowful. So the train was laid. But no one had heard Farmer Cowlamb’s animadversions. Every one knew what a hatred Cowlamb had for pretentious people—dandified, fine gentlemen, people spending their entire income. There began to be wonder



that Cowlamb should encourage the young man as he did. He was often at the farmhouse. But it was not Farmer Cowlamb who encouraged the young travelling preacher, but Mrs. Cowlamb. If Mrs. Cowlamb was an obedient wife, professing the same contempt for fine folks as her husband as in duty bound, if she herself had no hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt, she was mightily impressed and flattered if fine folks made talk or paid court to her. She was in raptures with the new minister, continually singing his praises to Iphis, continually insinuating how well she and the young man looked together walking up the lane—her father had said it. But Iphis grew weary of such repetition, although as yet she showed no aversion to walking with him. Cowlamb chuckled. He saw his wife playing into his hands. He said nothing. Iphis would be distracted from that scapegrace. Women were like a steer diverted with a bit of red rag. If the young man got too forward, Iphis supple, Farmer Cowlamb was



not without weight in the connexion, coming out liberally as he did in money and kind, sewing meetings, &c. He was also alive to the fact that other elders were already regarding the young man gravely. A word from him, then would come the explosion; not loudly, no, the young man would easily be removed and get quiet words of counsel and admonition at parting. So it is easily seen that Farmer Cowlamb was not at all smitten with the prospect of a minister for his son-in-law.

But at last Mrs. Cowlamb's iterations of perfections to be found in the young minister sickened Iphis. Mrs. Cowlamb had not the discretion to stay and let a well-chosen word work its way. As fast as she discovered perfections Iphis found flaws; she began to curl her lip whenever her mother brought forward her *protégé's* name. Mrs. Cowlamb became more and more enraptured with Mr. Macwhortle's successor, continuing blind to Iphis's increasing antipathy to such a lover.

Iphis had submitted to his attentions good-naturedly. Her mother's eulogies were becoming so extravagant the girl could see plainly that nothing would please her mother so much as accepting his suit when he offered himself. The mother felt it was coming and Iphis began to realise it, and was quite determined to act decisively—to resolutely pull him up and send him to the right-about. In Mrs. Cowlamb's mind a minister's wife was a notable personage, the glory of the minister scintillating on his helpmeet. How they were 'made on,' such a couple, wherever they went! True, ministers' salaries were not large, but then every increase was considered, and Iphis's father would be no churl, he would never stand in the background, his hand on his pocket. Ah! poor woman, she soared too high, her ignoble offspring was captivated with no dream of social dignity. She had rather a contempt for junketing preachers and their wives. A mild suggestion of Mrs. Cowlamb's, that there were women who would

jump to be ministers' wives, was flouted by Iphis.

'I wouldn't,' declared Iphis in unqualified contradiction, 'and I wouldn't have that finikin fellow that's allus a coming here. I'd raither hev a joskin fra the plough-tail. He would addle me a living as a man should. His face is like a cow's ilder. Poor creatur!'

And Iphis's nostrils expanded with disdain.

Poor Mrs. Cowlamb, she may be excused if she was dumb for a reply; if she went afterwards and rasped at the servant girl until the girl's bed relieved her from her 'missis's' nattering tongue.

Iphis's retort was more a sudden explosion. The remembrance of it did not rankle in her mind. After, when she thought of it, no twinge of penitence disturbed her; she had but resented coercion.

Cowlamb was not slow to perceive the marked coolness now sprung up between Iphis

and her mother, or rather the hurt silence maintained by his wife. Cowlamb believed that his wife had overdone her part, and that her favourite was nowhere ; he was not sorry that it was so. He was rather proud to find that Iphis had nothing but contempt for such a man. He had only desired a diversion, a suitor to banish from her mind the reprehensible Ephraim, who continued a fervent member of the congregation. But Mrs. Cowlamb was too much in awe of her husband to give him the true merits of her repulse, and Iphis did not deem any appeal to him necessary. Cowlamb had only to go by his own perceptions. A walk down to Moortown one evening with the young minister came opportunely. The young minister was sentimental, showing a disposition to gather in knowledge of farming. He asked many questions on corn and cultivation which pleased the farmer. Sometimes his questions and remarks were silly enough, causing Cowlamb to wonder what a man country bred did with his eyes. Un-

luckily correcting Farmer Cowlamb's nomenclature of a tree, the minister blundered.

'Hesh,' said Farmer Cowlamb.

'Ash, Mr. Cowlamb, ash,' corrected his companion.

'I said "hesh,"' maintained the farmer, doggedly.

They walked on silently for some time, until the younger man began to think that perhaps the farmer had really taken less offence than his tone implied. It was a sign to him that he had judged correctly by the farmer resuming conversation.

'A clever young man like you, one 'ud think, would marry i' good time,' said the farmer, smoothly. 'Thou wast clever enough to tell me the name o' the tree though thou didn't know the tree by bole or bark nor leaf; has t' begun to think o' marrying?'

Clever as the young minister might be, he jumped to the conclusion that the farmer desisted in him a son-in-law. He could not see through old Cowlamb's sardonic humour—

that the farmer was bent on leading him out.

‘Well,’ said the minister, his eyes bright with hopeful feeling, prepared to accept good-naturedly all such quaint reproof, and disposed to make a complete breast of his sentiments, ‘I for some time wished to broach such a matter to you. I—ah—ahem—I hoped I had made a favourable impression upon the mind of Iphis, but I always thought the best course for me would be to ask you first if this was agreeable to you.’

‘That’s reight, young man,’ said the farmer, approvingly; but with an acute glitter in his eyes the young man was not quick enough to comprehend. ‘But what does Iphis say?’

‘Well—ah, I scarcely know yet. I haven’t really asked her; and Mrs. Cowlamb, she——’ stammered the young man. ‘I think she is on my side.’

‘Oh, thou deep dog, thou’s been at the owd woman, then—sweethearting her a bit,

has ta? Ah, well, I knowed from the first thou wast a pawky chap.'

Cowlamb's banter caused the young man to blush, but yet to feel himself more and more self-satisfied.

'Then, Mr. Cowlamb,' said he boldly, 'you don't object?'

'Object? No, not I, if thou thinks thou's a chanch; but stop abit, lad, I had forgot, thou has to travel a sartain time. Unless thou thought o' giving up the preaching? Has ta?'

'I can't say I have contemplated that.'

'Well, don't my lad, stick to thy preaching; the man that's got hold on the plough hails 's not to look back. Efter thou's seen Iphis we'll see about it.'

'It will be some years——'

'It will, and she's changeable thou thinks. But look what a while owd Jacob waited, and then they palmed another unto him. It was a mucky trick, and if it had been this time o' day, he'd have had to put up with her.



There's no letting 'em ha' two. I can't say I much opinion o' women ; some change about, and I known 'em stick to a fellow like cobbler's wax.'

In two ways Cowlamb's simile struck him. He began to chuckle : from former experience of the 'seat' the young fellow would know what wax was. But if the women were so adhesive, Iphis might still be sticking to Ephraim. The chuckle was strangled.

'Me and my first wife,' continued Cowlamb, without pausing, 'was a courtin' for I don't know how many years—years. We couldn't afford to git married, 'cause there was nobody to git us a house ready to wer hands, and I was determined I wouldn't git married on trust. Now, when I consithered to git married agean, I pulled the owd woman on my knee, and we made it up in five minutes. She was there in the house—I think she wanted me ; she niver said "Oh !" and thou sees I'd everything ready then. Now, what I thinks, ivery man ought to be sartain suer he



can afford it afore he gits married. It'll maybe turn out strange and expensive ; some folks aren't good at making ends meet. But for a fellow as goes and gets married afore he's ready wi' means aforehand, my opinion is, all such it sarves 'em right if they comes to break stones on the ramper.'<sup>1</sup>

The young man felt so very nervous after a sermon so much more to the point than any he had ever delivered, that he began to have grave doubts whether Farmer Cowlamb's permission to court his daughter was such a grand prerogative. He even went so far as to feel considerably doubtful whether he should have the nerve to ask Iphis to marry him, and wait until he was ready. Still he leaned on the farmer.

' You have been a successful man, Mr. Cowlamb.'

' And dost ee know the reason? Because I allus seed my work was done afore I thowt o' charging ; allus vallied a thing afore I gave

<sup>1</sup> Highway, from rampart.

a price. Would ta like to hear how I made a start?’

The young man expressed an inclination in polite but awkward deference. There were points and matter-of-fact sense in Farmer Cowlamb he had never before considered. He had hitherto looked upon Cowlamb as a hard-headed old flint, absorbed in farming and the routine of his life, never looking beyond it, or thinking of anything else.

‘When I was thy age,’ began Cowlamb, ‘I didn’t look forrad to gittin’ a livin’ without work. And I was main careful o’ my spendings ; I’d nobody to stand at my back. First time I seemed to make a mark after I got a bit o’ land was at Pardney Fair. Me and a man called Butter Hummings made it up to go and speculate. I got all the money scraped together I could, twenty-six pounds, and we went wi’ Butter’s hoss and cart. We had to be up long afore daylight, it was back end o’ th’ year, and thirty mile afore us ; it was dark a long way on the road. When we got as far

as Linlea Wood I obsarved Butter pull up summut out o' th' cart bottom, and he says to me—

‘ “Is thy money all reight, Cowlamb?”’

‘ I says, “It is, my lad.”’

‘ “Where ha’ ye got it?” says he.

‘ Says I, “In my pocket, to be suer, in a bag—twenty-six pounds.”’

‘ “Mind and take care on it, Cowlamb,” says he.

‘ I told him he needn’t be alarmed about that, and I says to him, “Where’s thine, Butter?”’

‘ He stopped the owd hoss and got out o’ th’ cart. I thowt it was to see if the axle or the springs was all right. Then he got in agean, and he says, “Aye, Cowlamb, mine’s safe as houses.”’

‘ We jogged on and Butter kept that thing in his hand he took out o’ th’ cart bottom, and I began to be curious about it, so I says to him, “What has ta got there?”’

‘ “A pistil,” he says.

‘I laughed at him fit to end mysen. “Why,” I says to him, “thou surely ant scar’d o’ being robbed?”

‘“I don’t know so much about that ; it’s a lonesome owd road,” says he. “Onybody mud pop out o’ that dark owd wood and rob us.”

‘I laughed at him. Butter was a timid feller. When it was daylight I wanted bad to let it off, but Butter wouldn’t let me. “I wouldn’t yit, Cowlamb ; you may let it off as we come home,” says he.

‘We got to Pardney Fair wi’out being robbed, and Butter, when we got out, crep undernean the cart, and untied a bag off the axletree, and then after a good deal of unrolling, he pulled another little bag out of it, and his money was tied up in that.

‘“Thou sees, Cowlamb, *thou* didn’t think o’ looking theer,” says he, that deep. He was a little fellow, with such a little face, and a great high straight-brimmed hat. I can just see him now.

“ ‘Thou’s been at a vast o’ trouble,’ I says, laughing agean, “bud now thou’s got thy money, let’s be gone. Best customer’s a morning customer.”

‘We spent wer money well. Beasts wasn’t the figure they are now. I had a pound or two left and I thowt Butter hed an’ all, so I happened to light on a sweet yalla heifer, and I bowt it. I thowt Butter would lend me the rest, but when I came to ax Butter, he’d nobbut thirteen shillings left, and I was in a mess, I thowt. If it had been now I should ha’ gone to the man and told him who I was, and how I was fixed, and taken it away with the rest. And Butter no more dare go ax any o’ th’ jobbers he knew, and I didn’t wonder—we was fresh starters and they would ha’ been glad to cut wer throats. Butter went and driv the beasts out first, while I sneaked the hoss out o’ th’ stable, and driv off without looking round. I just felt as if we’d stolen something, but we was young and soft.

‘I would ha’ the pistil when we got back agean to Linlea Wood, an owd hoss-pistil wi’ flint and steel ; it ga me a black eye ; I thowt it had knocked me out o’ th’ cart. I told Butter he’d only to let a robber fire it off hissen to be safe fra being robbed. I rued I missed that yalla heifer ; it was a pretty un. Butter allus comes to me when he wants owt ; he come last week and made me a bid for some yows. I might ha’ stickled for a shilling a-head more. We often talk about the yalla heifer, and how well we did do wi’ them we did get. I nobbut got two black eyes in my life ; th’ tother was feighting at Rundleby feast. Ya preach at our chapel o’ Sunday agean ; ya mun go home with us. If ya mean to ha’ my lass ya moant flag. If I’d nobbut stuck to the yalla heifer I should ha gotten it, but I thowt I wasn’t man good enough.’

The crafty farmer thought there were signs that the young man saw too many difficulties before him, was growing disheartened, and

the tendency strong in him to retire from the field.

‘ Yes, it is my Sunday again. In fact I preach in the morning too, if you look at the plan.’

‘ Then, I s’ll expect you’ll go home wi’ me and have your dinner with us. We s’ll ha’ something good, we allus hev on a Sunday. O’ Monday we s’ll be inta har’s’t,’ murmured the farmer with worldly satisfaction.

## CHAPTER 7.

## A LOVE FEAST.

‘THERE’S a smell of a good taste,’ said Hosea, the waggoner, to Towse, as leaving chapel they neared the farmhouse, Cowlamb, his wife and daughter and the preacher some score of yards behind them.

‘I think that’ll be thy share on it, Hosey,’ returned Towse, with a dry chuckle. ‘Thou s’ll hev a bit o’ nice fat bacon.’

‘Nay, now, don’t dishearten one. I wish I had been a preacher,’ said Hosea, pitying his condition from the bottom of his soul; ‘I might ha’ been made on and gone to eat at houses and been at no cost to mysen.’

‘Thou’d ha’ liked that,’ said Towse, candidly.



‘I should that. And married a fine young woman wi’ rucks o’ money for me to spend I hedn’t hed a hand i’ addlin’.

‘Thou’rt turning softer,’ said the garthman, frankly.

‘Why he’ll hev her, I’ll uphold it. Look how the maister makes on him, and the missis a’most sweethearts him hersen.’

‘And how about the wench?’ interposed Towse; ‘she doesn’t matter him much, it braids o’ me.’

‘Why, how dost thou know, Towse?’

‘Why?—Zad. Thou allus ud go thruff the criss-cross row o’ questioning. Why, if I was to tell thee all I knowed or guessed at, thy long tongue ud spread it fra one end o’ th’ township to the other, and maybe git me into some hobble or other. But I don’t know nowt, and, what’s more, I don’t want to know. Nayther thou nor me’s a chanch.’

Their own dinner was awaiting them, and there was less opportunity for a benign mentor to correct the raw conceptions of an ingenuous

Telemachus. Domestic topics absorbed Towse—counsels, admonitions, threats. A criticism of the morning's discourse was expected by the wife, which never failed to gain the attention and respect of the lads in the house. Towse was an oracle of common sense in his own domestic circle. He was not devoid of a dry humour, and scarcely ever giving way to laughter himself, he had the reputation of a quirky fellow.

Dinner at last was over and the table cleared. Mrs. Towse had removed everything. One of the children swept the floor, another was washing up. No time was lost, for every Sabbath Mrs. Towse had her labour of love in getting her children ready for Sunday school. Joel required much attention; his hair had to be brushed up to a curly ridge after the trying operation of face-washing. It was as sunshine after rain when the Sunday coat was held out temptingly for Joel to insert his arms in the sleeves.

Towse was dozing still, not oblivious, and

the two lads regarding Joel with a sleepy good-natured look of interest on their sleek faces. The room contained yet the aroma of dinner. The investiture of the proud Joel was at last complete.

‘They tell me he was such an a good boy this morning,’ said Mrs. Towse—‘who taught thee, Joel?’

‘Ephraim! I did as I liked,’ said Joel feeling the advantage it was to have a friend in camp.

‘I’ll uphold it he wodn’t say thee nay,’ said Mrs. Towse, confidently. ‘And,’ added she, with mental surprise, ‘to think o’ Ephraim turning religious and a teacher! He’ll maybe git to be a preacher.’

‘I can’t see,’ said Towse with half closed eyes, ‘why folks can’t be good wi’out giving it out they’re religious. A lot o’ chaps has to sign a pledge afore they can gie ower gittin’ drunk. Why, laws-a-me, I could allus make it up in my mind to be tectotal wi’out writing my name and gittin a bit o’ tin or card.’

‘Aye, bud,’ said Mrs. Towse, ‘they hadn’t all like thou, Towse.’

‘Some better and some woss,’ said he. ‘Here’s a many on us bound to be bread and butter saints. There was a dele o’ Cath’lics about where my faither came fra. He used to call ’em that to hissien, ’cause he could remember their faithers being Prodestants till they’d a chanch of a good farm under a Cath’lic landlord, and their baens turned out ranker than the regular sort—hosses and cows hed to be Cath’lic an’ all,’ added he caustically.

‘Ye see,’ said one of the men, with utterance so painfully slow and voice as husky and indistinct, ‘they put summuts in the beer. I seen chaps as nobbut had a quart so far gone they couldn’t see thruff the rungs of a stee.’ Evidently Eli’s faculties had only followed Towse as far as the abstinence question. So Towse cried back.

‘It caps me,’ said Towse, ‘the many names they hev for a man being drunk, as if saying “drunk” was as bad as ripping and swearing. One says he’s tight, and another says he’s

on the lowse. Same as when a man's money's getting low they say he's hard up.'

'Now then, Joel,' said Mrs. Towse, briskly, 'show Hosey how fine thou art.'

Joel eagerly crossed the floor. Hosea, who often teased, was still a great favourite of Joel's.

'Bendigo !' cried Hosea.

Joel put out his tiny fists, and, these coming in contact with Hosea's unresisting body, Joel came to grief unexpectedly.

'Hellow,' said Eli a little brisker, 'thou'rt down at thy awn stroke.'

Hosea bent over and uplifted the prostrate Joel with one powerful hand.

'Dang it ! I do believe he's brokken a brick ; what a weighty chap it is,' said Hosea, affecting amaze.

'Naughty,' said Mrs. Towse reprovingly ; 'no Bendigo o' Sundays for suer.'

'Mother,' cried a voice from above, 'Rachel's a hitting me !'

'Ha done, or I mun bring the strap to ye

both. Come you down, you bad gells. Now, Joel is a good boy.'

Presently two of the elder children emerged from the stairs, having dressed themselves, but coming to the mother for a finishing touch. That given, Joel, nothing loth, left his friends to accompany them. Mrs. Towse at last had to go upstairs and rout others. Then, when all were despatched, she sat down opposite her husband.

'It is a good thing there is Sunday school,' said she, with a sigh of relief.

'There was nowt o' the sort when I was a lad,' said Towse.

'Ah, dear, I'd knaw how poor mothers did wi' their torn-down baens,' mused his wife.

A light step outside Mrs. Towse at once recognised.

'It's Iphis,' said she, uplifting a finger.

'An' left the preacher?' queried Towse, hypocritically.

'Heigh,' said Mrs. Towse hurriedly, but

with an inflection of impatience at her husband's thinly veiled humour, her nose curled in contempt or non-appreciation of preachers. 'Hush !' admonished she.

Eli and Hosea had smiles on their fat faces, smiles of men-servants, and sat back silently as if attitudes statuesque were the *sine quâ non* of respect and humility before betters. They were all ears, however, when Iphis had entered, and their round eyes never for a moment left her face.

"Begin harvestin' to-morrow then, Iphis ?" said Mrs. Towse.

'Yis,' she returned without interest.

'Deead ripe some on it. I wanted to start o' Seturday. It's got fitter this last two days, they been so melch. But th' maister knows best,' said Towse dutifully, waking up.

'Can't ye sit down ?' asked Mrs. Towse, persuasively.

'Heigh, sit down ; it's as cheap sitting as standing,' echoed Towse.

A look from Mrs. Towse was understood

by Eli and Hosea. They rose to their feet, and, taking prodigious strides, left the kitchen.

‘’Tisnt wise to let chaps hear iverything,’ said Mrs. Towse, affecting mystery ; ‘ that’s the worst o’ not having one’s house to one’s sen. Bud, poor chaps, they mun ha’ shilter.’

‘ A bit o’ out-doors weant hurt ’em,’ murmured Towse ; ‘ I’m sure it’s better than being cooped up inside. I’m sitting agean the fire, but we’re letting it go out.’

‘ Thou’s left th’ young minister ?’ said Mrs. Towse.

Iphis moved impatiently in her chair.

‘ Hes he goan to th’ school ?’

‘ He hedn’t when I left. I got away. I thowt he’d want me to go wi’ him.’

‘ Thou doesn’t care about being bothered wi’ a pack of baens ?’

‘ I don’t care about being bothered wi’ him. It is my Sunday an’ all ; I s’ll maybe go down when I think he’s nicely on the way. I can git there afore him, by going across th’ top o’ th’ wheat close.’



‘Thou hadn’t partial to him then?’ said Mrs. Towse.

‘I hadn’t, I think. I don’t know what they want wi’ him so much at our house. I been tired on him along while; I s’ll tell him so soon. They’ll ask him to bring his box next.’

‘What tales they do get up!’ said Mrs. Towse with a nod of her head implying more.

‘Who gets ’em up? I niver would hev him, I’d ha’——Eli sooner, as is nobbut a lad, or soft Hosey. It’s all mother; she’s crazed o’ preachers and ud give ’em the best i’ the house, the best she hed, if she’d to go begging for the next.’

‘A fine takin’ she’s in,’ said Mrs. Towse to her husband, as, shading her eyes, the good wife watched the girl’s fine figure sweep across the short clover, her head and shoulders only to be seen as she made her way swiftly down the long corn-field, a golden fringe on either side of her, a stunted hedge hidden from view by taller corn-stalks.

There was to be a love feast at the chapel that afternoon. Iphis was hurrying on to marshal her class into the square Zion. Towse intended following with his wife. Sunday school commenced at two o'clock, the love feast at three. Iphis passed Hosea and Eli idly sauntering thitherwards, each breaking the stem of a flower into bits as they slowly pursued their way.

Looking behind her when she reached the road, Iphis beheld three figures. She was some distance ahead of them, but she knew them to be her parents and the young preacher, and her temper did not become more equable. Some explanation, perhaps, would be expected of her for taking herself off so unceremoniously. She was in a proper frame of mind to do anything perverse, to even go against will or wishes.

Farmer Cowlamb, looking forward, also recognised her, and to the young man by whose side he was walking he said—

‘Why, yon’s our Iphis afore us.’

‘She went on to the garthman’s,’ whined Mrs. Cowlamb. ‘She’s strangely taken up wi’ ’em ; allus in and out.’

‘Ah,’ commented the farmer to the young man in an undertone, ‘she’s gen thee th’ slip. Thou mun look efter her. Thou’ll lose her else, like I did the yalla heifer, if ta doesn’t be determined.’

The suitor did not answer him. He felt his difficulty ; he already despaired of winning this wilful girl, of securing himself from the wind’s blast and the stomach’s needs. He was not to be pitied ; it was no genuine love prompting him, rather conceit, and the conviction that it would scarcely be possible for him to marry better. Nevertheless he felt piqued and humbled. Cowlamb had already divined his wife’s protégé had not the ghost of a chance, and with perversity and malice urged the young man on to greater efforts.

‘Follow ’em up now, then let ’em follow you up.’

But Cowlamb waxed less and less urgent ;

he began to divine that Iphis goaded might make the leap he wished to avert, be determined to hold out for Ephraim Sparrow and none other.

The children were trooping out of the schoolroom into the chapel as they arrived. Iphis looked flurried and hot, as though she had scarcely recovered from the effects of her hurry. She pretended to be unconscious of her parents' eyes, but gave the young man a quick scornful glance, in which was also repugnance if not hatred, and shot as if she wished him to comprehend as much. The young preacher started with a dim fear. He believed he must have unwittingly wounded the girl. Then he realised the moment after that his suit was ended. He was possessed with some shame ; the girl read his sordid motives, and she had a contempt for his shallowness. Nothing is more humiliating than to have it brought home to one that one's fancied cleverness and superiority is a sham, and that we have furnished food for a grin and mockery.

That look meant that she would have him understand he was never the lover for her, nor any man who went creeping up the old folks' sleeves first. It was a horrible afternoon for him. All along he had been buoyed up in spite of doubts. He had recovered himself after the first shock after hearing the story of Pardney Fair. He was naturally a cock-sure person, fancying himself above the ordinary run of mortals, a more stylish personage than the ordinary run of Nonconformist ministers. The prize was beyond him, after having, as he had fancied, made everything leading up to it secure.

His eyes unconsciously travelled up to the singing-loft, for he had not yet occupied the pulpit. A ruddy fellow was sitting there alone, with a grave and serious expression on his face, waiting for others to join him. Eventually Iphis Cowlamb went up there too.

The chapel filled, Hosea and Eli and the Towses came up. Hosea and Eli, with a

hankering after the square slices of seed-bread—bread flavoured with carraway—which would shortly be handed round on willow-pattern plates, the water, in blue and white pint-mugs, having to partakers a taste somehow different, as if the occasion sanctified it. But every one knew that it was Willowby well water.

The preacher took his place in the pulpit, and gave out two lines of the hymn :—

Father, supply my every need ;  
Sustain the life Thyself hast given.

He could hear Iphis's voice behind him distractingly clear. Hosea's mouth and also Eli's watered when he gave the concluding lines of the verse, the singers stopping in the middle of the tune with abrupt precision :—

Call for the never-failing bread,  
The manna that comes down from Heaven.

The preacher did not sing himself, but, holding the hymn-book in his hand, waited attentively. Succeeding two lines were given. He could not resist turning to look behind

him, and Iphis Cowlamb detected him, although from the direction in which her eyes were really straying, he discerned they were resting on the ruddy face of the youth who had been sitting so quietly and patiently in his appointed place when he with Cowlamb and his wife entered the chapel. He withdrew his glance and read :—

Let me no more in deep complaint,  
My leanness, O my leanness, cry.

With his thoughts it was not comfortable reading out such lines. Even the concluding ones to his mind breathed but cold comfort :—

But my full soul shall still require  
A whole eternity of love.

Perhaps not many people give a high standard to the poesy of the Wesleys, but it must be admitted that it breathes a pure and true feeling. People's minds go straying even under the best of preachers, and without so much irreverence as one is asked to credit. The minister applied every line where it could



have an application. Perhaps his mortification was to be for him a wholesome lesson. Even leaders in religion have their sensibilities, their humanity, their errors ; it is only the weak-minded in Establishment or Dissent who look upon their pastor as without spot or blemish. No doubt things carnal possess the mind of a preacher when mounted high above his flock expounding things spiritual. The vicar sees a head, and is embittered ; he cannot help thinking of his trumpery tithe. The minister has got into hot water with some cantankerous but influential member of his flock ; he sees the sour face regarding him, and all his fervour seems to him empty and powerless. The young minister was miserable now, because he felt that the rejected ones in a love suit generally have the laugh against them. He felt that he had been made a fool of, that the time was coming when he would be a subject for mirth. Every one, he believed, had seen him the self-confident lover of Iphis Cowlamb.



The minister was at his worst this afternoon. It had been remarked that Mr. Macwhortle's fire, like Elijah's mantle, seemed to have descended upon his successor. There came the supplication after the hymn, but the minister's heart was not in it. To himself it was a sickening jargon of repetition, to which the amens and hallelujahs and other antistrophes of the congregation were unencouraging, because they were more fervent and honest. He felt lukewarm, wounded pride more than wounded love in his heart.

It was but a short service, consequently soon over. During the closing supplication an elderly man among the singers passed his hymn-book in which he had written with some effort:—‘The singers is ast to stay at the end of the servis.’

It was only to practise a tune over for the evening. Often the singers stayed behind, regarding the odd half-hour so spent with some pleasure. Every face was grave as if impressed with the importance of the mess-

age. But as soon as the preacher concluded the service it seemed the signal for disorder.

The same elderly man who had passed on his hymn-book now held in his hand one of the willow-pattern plates, upon which remained a solitary square of bread. Many eyes regarded it. But quick as thought it was snatched by Ephraim Sparrow, and nearly the whole of the crumb bitten out at one bite. A laugh came from Iphis Cowlamb, enjoying the discomfiture of the others. In spite of the elderly man's grave gesture, the disorderliness became general.

Cowlamb had beheld Ephraim Sparrow up aloft. Had seen Master Ephraim eating his seed-bread with the sanctimoniousness of a long-professing member. The farmer was convinced in his own mind that this Sparrow was an arrant young hypocrite, as well as a specious and audacious rascal. He would have felt much more comfortable with this blacksmith's lad in the body of the chapel. Who had requested him to become a singer ?

What did he know about singing? He would like to find out the zany whose officiousness had been so prominent as to ask such a scoundrel to sit up there.

To Cowlamb everything went contrary.

He waited for Iphis outside the chapel gates. An old member, surmising the reason why he lingered, acquainted him that the singers were stopping to practise.

‘I’ve a good mind to wait on her,’ thought the farmer, and he looked his thoughts to the young minister, adding, warningly, ‘Thou’ll ha’ to look efter her?’

‘Shall I go back and wait for her?’ suggested the young man.

‘Well, if I was thou I should,’ said Cowlamb, raspingly. ‘Thou oughtn’t to wait o’ me telling thee what thou should’st do, Lord bless my soul!’

Farmer Cowlamb did not consider his ejaculation *infra dig*, for a Christian. He would have argued otherwise.

The young man went back, clomb the

narrow staircase. As his head emerged he beheld a curious sight—Miss Cowlamb most undignifiedly struggling with the ruddy-faced fellow for the possession of a crust of bread he was endeavouring to bite, Miss Cowlamb endeavouring to prevent him, all the others laughing. He tried to laugh, but it was not a laugh—his smile even was a sickly one. But they all began to say in meek propitiation—

‘It’s Mister Systrick!’

‘You are having a little fun,’ commented he, endeavouring to be smooth. He could tell the way their thoughts went—that he was a third wheel to the cart, that he would have been much better away, thus coming to repress all mirth. He met all their faces with an effort, but Iphis Cowlamb’s was the worst to meet of them all; in the bloom suddenly raised there was vexation, defiance, contempt. She still stood by Ephraim, his wrist unrelinquished. And the ruddy-faced fellow was as imperturbable as a statue, his

face, though, evidently plastic to the mirth or gravity of Iphis Cowlamb's mood.

They all made way with some respect for the minister when they saw it was his intention to speak to Iphis. The elderly man at the first blush was framing an excuse for them all, scoring to youth the defection from continence.

'Mr. Cowlamb asked me if I would stay to accompany you home'—Mr. Cowlamb had really not gone so far as to ask him that—'will it be agreeable to you?'

'No!' returned Iphis, bluntly. 'I can find my road home by mysen, thank you. I *have* done offenses.'

Then she turned her back upon him, as if she sought approval from the ruddy face she now hid from him. She still held the fellow's wrist.

The young minister whispered with some entreaty—

'Your father desired me Miss Cowlamb——'

‘Did he?’ muttered she sarcastically. ‘Oh, you needn’t wait, Mr. Systrick; you can go.’ Then she changed her voice, and in an undertone of sulky recklessness she whispered, ‘And you’ll go tell him. Well, you may. I don’t care what you tell him—there.’

She looked to Ephraim as if looking somewhere for an ally; but Ephraim’s face was opaque. Only in the eyes shone a twinkle. She found it there after a little delay, and something of the sympathy she sought. A word from her and Ephraim’s religion would have gone to the winds; the pertinent young minister, long and likely as he was, a mark for Ephraim’s prowess.

But no thought of such violence entered Iphis’s mind. She only wished her favoured suitor to declare with his eyes he was with her through thick and thin.

‘Oh, no; I shouldn’t think of such a thing,’ said the young preacher, crestfallen, but with pride. ‘I must catch up Mr. Cow-lamb, I suppose.’

‘They needn’t wait o’ me, tell ’em—tea, I mean.’

Ephraim who heard her, and one or two others, were reminded in her voice and temper insensibly of the farmer. She brooked no temporising. Even Ephraim felt a little startled. The young minister needed no other dismissal.

Once out on the road, he hurried along swiftly to overtake the farmer and his wife. Cowlamb saw him coming, and he stopped in his slow walk and waited for him. Mr. Systrick quickened his pace almost into a run.

‘Now, then?’ interrogated the farmer, eyeing him critically. The young man had a jaunty carriage, holding his head high, to Cowlamb his manner suggestive of a small wit. Indeed, the preacher felt there was more conceit in his gait than there ought to be under the circumstances. ‘Now, then,’ repeated Cowlamb, spitefully, ‘weant she ha’ thee?’

‘She will come along alone.’



‘And she didn’t thank thee for offering thysen?’ twitted Cowlamb. ‘And thou took her at her word. Lord! when thou’s lived as long as me thou’ll larn better nor that. If she’d said “Go” to me, iver so radgy, I should ha’ stopped as solid as a judge.’

‘But you are her father.’

‘Heigh, but if I was thou, I mean,’ said Cowlamb, impatiently; ‘thou comes to me and tells me thou wants her, and then thou can’t look efter her. Everybody’s seen what’s been going on; thou’s making a fool o’ me, and that I can’t abear.’

And Cowlamb affected force and indignation. He was vexed with Iphis, and he vented his ire on her rejected swain.

But the young man had a faint suspicion that Cowlamb had been using him, was now laughing at him, though full of displeasure. Cowlamb plodded on silently, a pace or two in advance of his wife, and the minister was fain to walk on undignifiedly behind, neither in a line with Mrs. Cowlamb nor well behind



her. He felt like a whipped boy, his influence with her waning, for she was much less gracious. He began to wish he had never returned to the familiar town and so kept clear of this ill-starred village. No man was ever a prophet in his own country. He had fancied the hearty welcome he would receive in the town where he was bred, had counted upon the social courtesy he would receive—the distinction which comes to a man who has done credit to the spot which should be dear as familiar to him. The crafty farmer, unchristianlike, had a little satisfaction in the thought that he was having a little revenge. The preacher must feel himself a little humiliated. Still Cowlamb was mortified ; he had meant to use this dandified preacher as a foil to Ephraim Sparrow, but the ‘poor creature’ had not enough in him. Cowlamb was not a little content that this young man was not her fancy. He felt that if there had been a sign of the preacher’s suit growing into anything he would soon have been up in arms.

Reaching the farmhouse, Cowlamb went upstairs, leaving the minister to himself. There Cowlamb waited patiently, his glass at his eye, or close at his elbow upon the chest of drawers. The young man below, as uncomfortable as he well could be, eaten up with his own thoughts and his discomfiture. He had not even Mrs. Cowlamb to talk to, and, even if he had had her company, he felt that the newsiness he had learned from older men of his cloth, of class, of district meetings, the cause, and other topics, would have fallen flat. Mrs. Cowlamb was in no amiable mood, although her face was smooth as her manner to him was polite. She was not so unjust as to hold the young man responsible for Iphis's wilfulness, or for the servant-girl, a laggard, listening to the soft nothings of her swain, ignoring the after-clap ; but it was trying to the best of tempers having to get tea ready single-handed. She came in and out the room with the tablecloth and her tea-service. On no account would she have suffered a blundering

lass to touch her sacred china or her glass-ware—even Iphis with some fear and trembling; but she had had to make the fire up, which was low. All these little things affected her, and her manner to the preacher was icy or distraught. Once she had to set her sugar bowl down hurriedly and hasten back into the kitchen, the kettle boiling over, to the prospective sully of her polished grate and fire-irons and spotless hearthstone. The minister worried her too with putting in his sentences edgeways, as if he felt himself bound to say something. But it was the way of inconsiderate young men. Why couldn't he sit quiet and take up the 'Recorder?'—What was Cowlamb doing upstairs? But she had no time to go and see, only to shout at the stairs foot, 'Maister! Maister! you might come down and sit with Mester Systrick.' 'Heigh! heigh! heigh!' replied her husband carelessly.

The preacher realised that his reign was over, and that henceforth he would be received

only on sufferance. Cowlamb judged that he had something else to do but sit with Mr. Systrick. The preacher was scarcely worth his salt now in Farmer Cowlamb's estimation. Hospitality henceforward was to be a most ceremonious affair for this poor travelling preacher.

The farmer was looking over his fields, over the waving wheat, the nodding barley, the tremulous oats, green and heavy and rank yet, unto the winding road. Now and again he raised his glass and took a wide range. A few pedestrians were walking along laboriously, elderly and zealous brethren from the town so near the extremity of the village. They had been delayed interchanging courtesies, or sitting for a few minutes in a brother's or sister's house, engrossed with the cause and their own growth in grace. Some were honest, some specious. But no Iphis as yet. He would know her among a thousand, the fine lithe figure of which he had long been so proud, the firmly poised head on the even

shoulders. Her springy walk he believed had scarcely its equal, in repose there was in her carriage a suggestion of unconscious grace and reserved force.

Taking the glass from his eye he waited a minute or two.

‘Mester!’ shouted Mrs. Cowlamb, ‘are we to make a start or wait on her? I’ve mashed the tea.’

‘Wait!’ shouted Cowlamb back again, wrothly laconic.

He swept the road. Yes, there she was coming along decorously enough—some one with her. Ah, sure, it was that confounded lad again! But they came along soberly enough. He felt exasperated to find that she was taller than her companion.

‘Who’d ha’ thowt she’d taken up wi’ such a sturtened creatur,’ muttered he, his mind returning to the preacher below, who was tall and well built, if he had a pasty, sallow face. How she turned her head to her companion; she was much too liberal of her favours, Cow-

lamb thought, where she would bestow them. The pair reached the lane end ; they seemed as if they were about to part. What was the soft lass's megrim ? She stretched out both her arms and touched him with her finger tips, as if pushing him away banteringly. It was will-he-nill-he work, the farmer thought, with a sardonic grin. It was she, he thought with some indignation, who was doing all the courting.

‘I’ll sweetheart her,’ muttered the farmer, without any definite idea of how he would carry out his threat, for threat it was.

Cowlamb’s eye never left them. The lad evidently was gaining courage, he caught the fingers in his hard hands, held them fast, she struggling to free them. He as suddenly relinquished them, had his arms around her. Cowlamb gasped with rage and excitement. She turned her face away, but the lad was not to be baulked or turned aside. It was a rough scramble, but he at last was successful in accomplishing his object. He



had kissed her, and she was as suddenly let go.

Cowlamb's exasperation was boundless. The hussy, well might she hang her head ! Then, it could only have been fancy, only a north-east breeze was blowing, and his window was partially open, but he fancied he could hear her laughter. No, there was not a jot of evidence to show that she had resented this freedom. They did not separate. Up the lane they came, he with his arm around her waist, her head near upon his ; it could not rest very well on his shoulder, for she was fully as high as he.

The farmer would have liked to complete the discomfiture of the swain below, but his pride went against such an exhibition of his daughter's disgraceful conduct. Iphis should laugh and dance to a tune of his piping, not to a wild extravaganza of her own, or he would bury her alive somewhere—at Sam's. There, at Snailhorn, she would be well out of the way.

He would talk to her ; it was of no use letting this thing go on any longer. If only the miserable cur below was out of the house, she would have his meaning at once. Only if he went out to meet her and stormed at her, she would make it too apparent when she came in that there had been a *fracas* between them, and he did not wish things to look at their worst before their guest. But he would stop at home from chapel and have Iphis to himself, if only for an hour. It had gone far enough. He would go to the blacksmith and threaten him with the loss of his work if he did not talk to and discourage his apprentice, and show him his unparalleled effrontery. And if Ephraim still continued stiff the blacksmith must be as peremptory : give him a hard time of it, so that the lad should take himself off gladly. If he once ran away, Cowlamb thought, he would never dare show his face in Willowby again. If every other action failed, then Iphis must be packed off to her brother's.



Poor Iphis ! she came in singing, joyous as a lark, proud and conscious of her Sunday bravery. But her song ceased when she saw her father's soured visage and his condemning eyes. He went into the room without a word to her. She, as soon as she had divested herself of hat and jacket, which she laid neatly on a table in the kitchen, followed him rebelliously, although scarcely realising why she should be out-of-the-way rebellious. It was not a crime refusing to allow Mr. Systrick to wait for her. Her father, if he was cross, must get pleased again. She was not going to show anything but scant favour to the man who she surmised was now in the house. Iphis carried her head jauntily. Her stern old father had never crossed her in his life but he had come to, and always with some sign or token of fondness. He would come to in this. Maybe he *had* seen Ephraim leave her at the gate. She wasn't going to marry Ephraim straight off. She thought he would court her until he was loose, then her

father would give in when he saw there was no help for it. Only a few weeks had elapsed since her first *rencontre* with Ephraim, although she had regarded him with interest previously ; but she realised how rapidly love assimilates, conquers, and overthrows ; what a persistent foe it is to fight ; what an undiplomatic factor it is in human destinies.

## CHAPTER 8.

## HARVEST.

God smiles upon us in the bountiful harvest. A tropical sun, a prodigal cornucopia. No other month of the year so profuse, so rich in its gifts. At one time an intensely bright moon shone upon high-piled wains, patient horses, labouring husbandmen. But now the work is done so quickly, the seed sown so much earlier, the true harvest moon comes in too late. Better drainage has forwarded the ripening, improved the soil, and made it less cold and backward.

Into the towns of this fine farming county came bodies of immigrants, upon their shoulders scythes and gathering rakes, their countenances eager and earnest, their

gestures and their tongue uncouth and barbarous to those native to the soil. A full measure of contempt and dislike these poor foreign toilers had to contend with. To the English labourer the ways of the Irish, their cooking, the way they slept—in sacks in the farmer's barn, or in a stable—their religion and their observances were repulsive, outlandish, and hoggish.

‘Talkin’ such muck!’ the English labourer growled, hearing them converse together. To him it was irritating. What might they not be saying about him?

The English labourers worked aloof. The farmer himself counted the immigrants slippery. Perhaps they were, and only to be dealt with at piece-work. But they toiled hard on scanty or coarse fare, walked mile upon mile sweeping the plains, then ascended the wolds where corn was later ripening.

Farmer Cowlamb had his complement of Irish here as at Snailhorn. They would come, the same Irish, for a couple of years or

longer, then they would be forestalled by another party, the consequent dispute to be settled with fighting, the aggrieved party departing with deep curses and maledictions on their lips, sending malevolent glances behind them. The English labourers beheld these skirmishes with some satisfaction; it was all one to them which side got the worst, they would have been equally stolid had both factions been annihilated.

Sometimes a pitiful farm maid-servant or labourer's wife would cook them their bacon after some Paddy, glib and better-looking than his fellows, had appealed to woman's tender nature. This and bread was their staple food; one or two days a week they had a feast of vegetables. Sometimes after the day's work was over a parley would be held between the two nationalities—a no-man's land between them—the Irish feeling themselves on sufferance, uttering vociferous blarney, accepting humbly the Englishmen's implied superiority, their dull wit and sar-

casm. They were savages for whom there was only one or two months' use in the year. Sometimes an Irishman ingratiated himself on a farm and stayed behind, becoming a factotum in the crewyard and about the stables, cutting straw for the horses, getting in hay and other fodder, crushing corn, doing work an English labourer would consider of no particular quality. Tim or Michael would be the butt of those native born, but the Irishman would hold his own. His tongue would curry favour, he would accept his position with great good humour, telling stories of the ways of 'ould Ireland' with much naïve drollery. In time he would begin to be considered not only an useful adjunct on the farm, but a jester who was invaluable for keeping all other workers cheerful.

From Moortown Cowlamb's few Irishmen came up on the Sunday night, received their sacks, and took to their quarters, and the first 'wottle' day of the week, though so early the sun had not risen, every man was setting out,

eager to commence the most important function of the year—‘har’est.’

They gathered in small knots before getting out of the old seeds close, waiting for the farmer. Every available man was there. The garthman left his sheep and the cows, the steers had long been sent to Cow-lamb’s marsh-feeding land twenty miles away. Towse’s eldest boy remained in charge of the farm buildings, with Iphis in authority over him, garthman to give odd minutes when he could, and start the boy fair, so that all should go well. Hosea and Eli yoked a pair of horses to the reaper, and an extra man or two came out of the village. Mowing round for the reaper—that innovation which has carried the day and brought hand-labour to a minimum—was let to the Irish. Soon the jar of the machine was heard, and men, women, and children were busily occupied following it, the women raking or gathering, the children making bands, the men gathering and tying. Towse’s wife was the only helpmeet who did



not go with her husband ; she had enough to do at home.

By an ordinary breakfast hour some portion of the great field was cut, and sheaves lay irregularly in the wake of the reaper. Perhaps an odd stook would be raised, but under its arch a scarlet-hooded infant lay ensconced on a shawl or petticoat, with a luncheon basket and a stone jug to keep it company. At intervals the mother would seek the stook, fondly call to the infant, and the infant would crow to her or cry out plaintively for the breast. But the exigencies of the day forbade her lingering. After hurried caresses the toiling<sup>\*</sup> mother had to lay down her babe again, and follow wearily until the setting of the sun and after.

In the middle of the morn each man straightened himself and gathered breath, and sought the basket and the jug. Now, there was a moment or two for gossip. The Irishmen were mowing out a corner where the wheat was 'laid.' The men turned, survey-



ing with an ill eye the Irish, who gave themselves no rest. These people, uncanny in their language, had uncanny ways, seeking to curry favour with so much zeal.

A labourer from the village wiped the sweat off his brow.

‘We s’ll ha’ to work a bit harder, my lads, shop things is dearer, so my missis here says. Time o’ th’ year one doesn’t want to hev a light to go to bed wi’, thank the A’mighty, still one doesn’t like to be weout a bit o’ can’le i’ th’ house when one hes a houseful o’ baens, owt happenin’ i’ th’ dark. An’ they’re dearer. They said at the shop tallow was up.’

‘They’s goin’ to be war—I’ll uphold it,’ said a woman. ‘When I was a baen, iv’ry-thing got that dear, there wa’s a war on somewhere, and for six weeks we’d nowt greasy i’ th’ house barrin’ a tallow can’le, and that we couldn’t fessen on nohow thoff wer minds were good enow.’

‘Heigh, I remember that time, Caroline.

I remember seein' my faither wi' his crust o' rye bread. He was soughin', he nobbut got a day or two in a week—i' back end it was. He said he niver hed hed to live o' dry bread, and he never would, so he swalled it about i' th' ditch watter.'

' 'Tis all true for sartin.'

' Them was bad times.'

' I think when things a poor man eats gits up, corn and shop things, it's sartin the head men's fallen out.'

' Well,' put in Towse soothingly, ' one can do wi'out can'les this time o' year.'

' Why,' said Hosea, in simple amazement, ' are they goin' to feight by can'le-light?'

' Law, I'd knaw, like as not. They can't kill anew by daylight, and maybe days is short there. They do say when they're long here they're short somewhere and t'one'r way on. 'Here's nobbut so much light for the whole world, and it hes to be shared out. I' summer we gittin' more than wer share, so i'

winter we hes to do wi' less. Ya can't burn a can'le at both ends.'

As the wiseacre of the neighbourhood, there was no one bold enough to contradict him. Caroline, as if immersed in thought, said gravely—

'We s'll ha' to mind and make both ends meet.'

But Caroline was the last person in the world to rise up as oracle. She did not gain wisdom by bitter experience. Herself and liege lord were notoriously improvident, living royally the fore end of the week; on short commons the remaining days. Treacle and bread is not invigorating food for outdoor work, toiling hard; but she and her brood had the good sustenance of opening days to think of. To the thriftier ones Caroline's conduct was a puzzle. It is a delicate subject speaking to any one for their good, but if a word was said to her she treated it with perfect good humour, cavalierly acknowledging that she was one of the incorrigible sort.

Moreover, Caroline could detect her own faults without outside assistance, but the mischief was, she never commenced her own reformation.

‘Now, if ’twas feightin’ by fists,’ said the wiseacre from Willowby, ‘I think we should maister all comers. We’ve had some good feighters hereabout, but they gotten out o’ practice, ’tishn’t so much o’ th’ go as it used to be. If a fellow starts feightin’ he’s “drunk and disorderly,” and he’s soon walked away and locked up. Thou wodn’t know owd Adam Baxter, Towse. “I can feight, I’m a relation o’ Aireyman’s,” he used to swagger when he was hafe drunk, and he hed as pritty a little lass as iver a man’s mouth wattered after, and smart and nimble, and they used to call her “Aireyman’s pritty little lass.”’

‘Owd Bess Constable,’ said Caroline, contemptuously.

‘Maybe she is nowt to look at now,’ said the male gossip, warmly; ‘bud if I’d nobbut

ha' clapt love to her ear, I shouldn't ha' hed any occasion to go moilin' to the end o' my days. She saved a thousand pounds out o' dress-making and shopkeeping. She'd saved a hundred golden sovereigns afore she left home, 'cause her faither found her i' clothes and vittles ; and she used to keep her money i' little heaps in her box bottom—and it's the Bible truth, her brother told me with his own lips, that once when he was hard up, he took a pound off every heap, and she never fon him out.'

'And what good did all her money do her?' inquired Caroline, hotly. 'They reckon she niver let her man hev a new suit o' clothes fra the day he married her to the day he deed. She killed him wi' hard work an' empty belly. What good did all her money do her, I want to know?'

'Kep her off th' parish, Caroline,' said her antagonist with keen emphasis.

'Well, I been on the parish, and I s'll go on again,' said Caroline, recklessly. 'And if

there's goin' to be a war, we s'll be on the parish maybe sooner.'

'They hadn't goin' to feight,' said Towse, to quiet the storm. 'My missis hes a nephly—that's Ephraim's brother—and he's some sort of a soldier ; but he's on a ship on watter. And he's comin' ower here to our house : he's no sort of a home.'

'Oh,' said the man of the village, 'he'll be suer to know whether it's to be peace and plenty or war and shorts. Ha' they let him come home afore he goes, thinks ta ? They hev such deep ways, them head men !'

'Nay, how should I knaw ?' answered Towse, somewhat less confident of peace.

'It's that owd Napollyon agean stirrin' up the owd bother,' said Caroline with some decision ; 'my faither used to talk about him. He took a lot o' leatherin', but they bet him out at last. They was continually 'listin' then. He's at it agean, and must be near a hundred, I se think. Maybe it's a son ; feightin' runs i' the blood. All the Baxters were feighters ;

all the Aireymans was an' all they tell me, and was much thowt on. One got to live like a gentleman, just to show great folks how to feight and ha' pitch battles. And all the Baxters about here ud rather drink and feight than go to work.'

'Napollyon,' said Caroline's arraigner, with Bunyan perhaps in his head ; 'yis, I've heerd tell on him. 'Tis all in the Bible, isn't it ?'

'No-a,' said Towse, 'there's nowt about him there, I'm thinking.'

'Bud I'm telling thee,' emphasised the man of the village stubbornly, ''tis i' the New Testyment ony road.'

'Nay,' said Towse, 'I niver seed it ; man and boy for forty year I've read odd chapters to pass time, I mun ha' gone thruff it all it braids o' me.'

'Thou might ha' missed that.'

Towse shook his head incredulously, but with some quaver in his mind that he might have missed a portion.

'There's summuts else tied to the Bible



then isn't there ?' questioned the man of the village in desperation.

'There used to be, but they've left it out now they tell me. Ask Iphis. They'd some reason for it, I'se think, but it's not for us know-nowts to tell why. It's the great scholars that's done it.'

Towse's admission was some comfort to the man of acquired reputation.

'Dost ee remember owt about it ?'

'It's in owd Bibles,' said Towse. 'Our owd woman yonder at Burnby hes one that hes it in wi' the Prayer Book, and King Charles, wi' th' tents o' Israel and a lot o' such. A dele more in it then as we uses nowadays. A man could believe a lot more i' them days.'

'It was a comfort,' said a woman, 'to think i' them days how full o' religion one could be. Nowadays 'tis such a bit as one hes to believe, there's plenty o' room for other things to git into one's heead besides goodness. One hedn't room afore.'



‘I’m afraid there’ll be a many more lost than time years back,’ came from a despondent voice, wife of the wiseacre.

‘Hed they a name for what they left out?’ asked her husband of Towse, returning to the point which interested him.

‘I niver could tongue it. I didn’t read it much; if I did I’ve forgotten.’

‘I’ll uphold it there’d be all about Napollyon there, an’ that Ingland ud be lost an’ won i’ one day, and not an Inglishman left to say how it was all properly done.’

‘I’ve heerd o’ all that afore,’ said Towse, agreeing, ‘bud I didn’t knaw there was owt about it in the Bible, nabour. We mun ast Iphis, she knaws the far end o’ sich things.’

‘Bud nowadays they tell me they nobbut let common folks larn out o’ Bibles; there’s grander books for folks to larn out on that can afford to pay.’

‘Things ha’ altered i’ thy an’ my bit o’ time,’ said Towse.

‘They hev for sartain. I’ll uphold it Cowlamb would hev her larn the very best money could pay for, Johnny Wesley as he is.’

‘An’ a creatur an’ all,’ said a discontented soul, ‘peepin’ back o’ hedges an’ comin’ on one unbeknown, to see if a poor labourin’ man addles his money.’

‘Oh, bless ye,’ said Towse, ‘he’s not all bad ; he’s good i’ his way, bud he’s such an a man for his penn’orth.’

‘A way that bein’ browt up i’ the Church respectfully doesn’t larn,’ said the discontented one, aggrievedly. ‘I niver heerd tell on an out-and-out Churchman hevin’ sich mucky ways.’

‘True for ye, Seth,’ agreed his companion from the village ; ‘thou’rt not a man to talk, but thou’rt a devil to think.’

This was all rank heresy to Hosea and Eli, who stood with open mouths. They perhaps had come under Cowlamb’s scathing and energetic criticism at times ; but, confined at

Towse's, their life seemed to them to be pretty smooth and pleasant.

‘We comfortable,’ said Hosea.

‘Heigh—bud if ya lived i’ th’ house ya’d be under his thumb a dele more.’

‘The men was i’ th’ house at Snailhorn,’ said Towse, ‘an’ they allus stopped till May-day, if they nobbut sattled at the first. Ya should ha’ seen the rhubarb puddings the missis used to make for ’em. I say—we mun be at it agean ; yonder she is.’

It was Iphis entering the corn-field. Work was renewed with fresh vigour. It was reprehensible to be discovered leaning on their tools gossiping at such a time. They had scarcely assurance to meet her eyes.

‘Have you seen father?’ cried Iphis, before she reached them.

‘Not sin’ he was i’ th’ swath close,’ replied Towse.

Great anxiety seemed to them to cloud her face. But they could not interpret the expression. Something urgent in the affairs

of the farm called for her father's immediate attention, she was in search of him. She retraced her steps.

‘She seems in a peck o’ troubles,’ said the man from the village.

‘Why, Towse,’ whispered Caroline, ‘Ephraim walks her out.’

‘What?’ cried Towse in amaze.

‘Why didn’t thou know? — Ephraim turned religious and school teacher, an’ courts Miss Iphis? Why, Farmer Cowlamb and Peter shook hands wi’ him that Sunday.’

‘Oh law,’ groaned Towse, ‘I hope the fical weant git us into no hobble.’

A suspicion of Iphis’s cause for agitation now passed through Towse’s mind. Her imprudence had come to her father’s ears.

‘Why, laws-a-me, Cowlamb’s nowt to brag about. When he began he was no better fellow than poor owd Ephraim.’

‘Heigh! heigh!’ groaned Towse, with dull abstraction, drawing with his rake a shock of corn to his boot. He tied up his sheaf and

turned to look behind him. 'What can the wench be thinking about?' he muttered; 'there's such lies gets about, Caroline,' said he bravely.

'Lies!' retorted she, 'it's Bible truth. I seed 'em thegither mysen.'

'Oh, well,' returned Towse, resignedly, 'he'll soon put a stopper to that.'

## CHAPTER 9.

## A SPY ESPIED.

FARMER COWLAMB had made the attempt. He had had his say. He did not stay away from chapel the Sunday evening, and keep Iphis indoors, as he at first thought that he would. The most honest person in the world has to think of appearances. At the last moment the farmer considered that his absence would be noted. He had never missed service since he had come to Willowby. He had never been away from home on a Sunday. When he was at Snailhorn he went once a day to church to keep neighbourly with the parson ; and for another thing, only one Dissenting service a day was held there. Here at Willowby the rector was an absentee ; it

was certain he could not be in three places at once, and he was a man who had no desire to be. Cowlamb was stern upon pluralists, upon all people who received money they did not earn. Out of his five hundred a year for Willowby the rector paid his curate one hundred and fifty to preach to empty benches ; for somehow Cowlamb and Willowby had a desperate opinion of the poor curate. It was neither more nor less than pure prejudice.

Cowlamb went to chapel, deferring the hour of remonstrance, of an understanding. He did not invite the minister to return home with him ; he had had enough of that incapable young man. As if fearful of being saddled with him, Cowlamb walked curtly out of chapel as soon as service was over, never looking behind him. His wife followed him with an undefined remonstrance against herself, against her husband, for being out of chapel first people almost, for not staying to walk with the minister, for not staying to parley with him.



‘If the young man wasn’t to be made on any more,’ reasoned she, ‘we ought to cool down by degrees.’

There was nothing of that kind about her ungracious husband. He never paused to soften his sentence. The young man saw only too palpably that his reign was over. The farmer had horribly neglected him that afternoon, had scowled at every one and no one in particular at the tea-table, and had been grumpy all the way to chapel.

Again Iphis lingered behind, and the preacher saw that the ruddy-faced, reckless-looking young fellow was close at her elbow. The preacher felt himself a bad second in the race, that the prize had slipped away from him. He walked along in the direction the farmer had taken ; he could see Cowlamb and his wife some distance before him, but he did not attempt to overtake them, feeling crest-fallen. Every now and then he could not refrain from turning to look behind him. It was opening the wound. But soon, measured

and slow as was his pace, the girl and her favoured lover fell back until he could scarcely discern them. They came along at a snail's pace, as if haste or briskness were not in the category of their virtues. The poor preacher felt himself now for ever severed from participation in the history of this rebellious daughter.

All Ephraim's shyness had gone. He had no hesitation now. When out of the village and out of sight of the inordinately curious or critical, he linked his arm within hers. It was the picture of 'a lover and his lass,' as they walked along the white road, edged with sufficient yellow stars of dandelions and tufts of ladies' fingers to satisfy any æsthetic pre-Raphaelite. They had all the abandonment of summer lovers. Nor did they exercise their minds for stilted platitudes. Conversation flowed as softly from their lips as ripples in a purling brook. They told each other their respective ages, birthdays, their first impressions of one another ; some annals

of their uneventful lives were provocative of mirth. There were peals of laughter and not much seriousness at any time. Sometimes Ephraim's cheek rested against Iphis's. It was suffered to remain ; then it was repulsed but not indignantly. He was but an untutored fellow, but there was something persuasive and gentle in his manner. No vicious light shone in his eyes, which were truly amorous lidded, his lips full and red, the eyes' mirth and mischief always seconded there. If anything, she could read him and admire him none the less ; he was disposed to be unstable and easily entrapped into any mad frolic. She inherited from her father an immense amount of penetration ; but a heritage of excessive wilfulness, perhaps from some other progenitor, neutralised the usefulness of such an element in her nature. Her lover, too, was quick in judgment ; he was aware that he had had no difficult task winning her favour, but he also divined that the calm look of her eyes went through and through him,

suspecting him of instability and gracelessness. The pouting lips could be serious, and stern, and resolute, as well as tender, and inviting, and wilful. Only Ephraim was not one to linger over his thoughts.

‘You’ll ha’ to come harvesting agean, Ephraim,’ said she, with the ecstatic self-complacency that such would afford her a glorious opportunity for flirting. ‘You came last year to give us a hand. What a strange thing I niver seed you to notice you!’ Her voice protracted her love-notes like a cooing dove.

‘I seed you,’ said Ephraim, with the accent of a lover who had worshipped his divinity afar off, afraid to prostrate himself too near.

‘Did you pick or loaden?’

‘Pick,’ answered Ephraim, laconically.

They dawdled up the lane as if summer evenings, bright and cool and breezy, were especially ordained for them, and they were determined to have full enjoyment out of

them. No thought as yet obtruded itself unpleasantly on Ephraim that the farmer would surely object to his suit. The manifest encouragement of the farmer's daughter had emboldened Ephraim to take the first plunge ; taken, he suffered himself to drift into the balmy flood—it was not a whirlpool yet. He had no mercenary views. He had insensibly suffered himself to fall under the spell of a subtle, illusory intoxication, but he was not so earnest as was Iphis. In fact he had not her earnestness, nor even her fickleness. She had reached the point when preference becomes a passion, to reach its height and be sustained, or cool down. It was astonishing how eager she would be in her fancies and actions, then seen again, lymphatic and pulseless. The object not to be obtained, her desire to be frustrated, a rebellious discontent and persistency ; anything easily attained, a wish or desire unopposed, careless acceptance and quick weariness.

It had not occurred to her as yet that her

father would violently set his face against the lover she would choose. He might be disappointed, or declare he had other views for her ; but naturally he would give in, as he always had done. She would not be too bold in accepting Ephraim's company even to the house door. Of that even Ephraim was a little rueful. It was tacitly understood between them that they must not be too impetuous. He must leave her in the lane outside the gate.

The linked arm was withdrawn, his arm passed across her back, so that her shoulder touched against his. She suffered her hand to rest in his on her hip, after a simulated gesture of remonstrance. It was slow progress in such a fashion. It was much easier walking cheek against cheek ; lips met lips oftener, and with less effort. Here every motion was seconded, and felt if retarded. He could tell that her pulse beat rapidly, his own ran as fast.

‘ Shall we be sweethearts, Iphis ? Thou’ll be my lass ? ’

‘ Sweethearts ? what should I do wi’ a sweetheart ? ’ murmured she.

‘ What do all do wi’ sweethearts when time comes—marry ’em.’

‘ You’d see somebody else you’d fancy better.’

‘ Nay, niver. I’d never look at onybody else.’

‘ They allus say so.’

Ephraim, easily disheartened, loosened his hold, causing in Iphis’s breast a flutter of concern. Had she repelled him ? Her eyes sought his face, it was troubled and clouded.

‘ Ephraim, would ye be scar’d o’ me ? ’

‘ No,’ answered he, dubiously.

‘ And I wodn’t be jealous o’ thou.’

Low laughter caused his face to brighten. Her eyes were dancing, a mischievous, tempting, daring look in them was not to be resisted. Quick as thought his arms gathered her in. She did not repel the embrace, her



own lips went out to his, every barrier of restraint seemed broken down.

They stood clasped and oblivious for some few moments, until Ephraim looking up, the hedge behind him, Ephraim fancied, stirred. It stirred again, some long thorns hanging over into the ditch still swaying. Ephraim fancied an eavesdropper, Eli or Hosea from the farmyard, but so near the farmhouse, that was scarcely likely.

‘What’s that?’ whispered he.

‘What?’ echoed she in a whisper likewise.

‘That hedge rustling?’

‘An owd yow nibblin’ it,’ she panted timorously, but fearful.

‘I thowt,’ said Ephraim threateningly, ‘it was Hosey or Eli watchin’ us.’

‘Nay, they dursn’t,’ returned she confidently; ‘if it was, I’d give ’em it,’ she added fiercely.

She disengaged herself, sprang up the bank, holding by twigs, her fingers delicately



grasping the bramble thorns. She looked over. What was her surprise to be confronted with the red, passionate face of her father as he rose from a stooping posture.

She sprang back as quickly, looking towards Ephraim with some consternation, for very shame not daring to meet her father's gaze.

‘It's father,’ whispered she, in a fright.

Ephraim at once commenced to move backward.

The farmer's face was red with rage. Ephraim could see that, for Cowlamb no longer lay concealed. His tall figure towered over the hedge, his expression furious. Cowlamb had not expected to be caught himself. This added to temper that had long been gathering. He took off his old work-a-day hat which he had donned, and rubbed his bald head with his handkerchief. A tall man, and stooping so long in such an uncomfortable position, his posture had caused the perspiration to gather in beads on his forehead.

Now he knew the full extent of his daughter's folly. It was shameful.

‘Hadn’t t’ shamed o’ thysen?’ shouted he hoarsely over the hedge to Iphis. ‘I’m shamed o’ thee—ah—git i’ th’ house wi’ thee, thou hussy. Thou’ll come along home with me another Sunday night. Ephraim, off thou goes. I’ll saddle thee another day. I’ll see thou doesn’t put thy foot upo’ my place agean. Come along, thou jade!’

‘It’s not Ephraim’s fault,’ defended she, passionately; ‘an’ I will hev him for a sweet-heart, reason or noan.’

‘Wilt tha?’ ejaculated the farmer, determinedly incredulous, ‘we’ll see about that. Now, then, my lad, thou’d better be off, or I s’ll be efter thee.’

Ephraim, thus admonished, continued moving backward a few paces at a time, coming to a standstill at every assertion or asseveration the obdurate father made, commencing his retreat again as the farmer waved his hand commandingly.

Ephraim had discretion as well as valour. Farmer Cowlamb might be getting on in years, but he would prove an adversary not to be considered lightly. Over six feet high, he was still powerful. Cowlamb believed himself as strong now as ever he was in his life. Ephraim was considerably undersized. However valorous a man may feel himself, in the grasp of a giant and lifted off his feet a stroke from the shoulder is then puny and harmless. Moreover Ephraim felt like a poacher.

The distance between Iphis and her lover was now increasing. Iphis slowly obeying her father's injunction to get into the house—Ephraim discreetly taking the farmer's hints to make himself scarce. But while Ephraim was escaping, Iphis felt that she was going to meet a further measure of upbraiding.

'A jawbastin' I shall git,' thought she with philosophical concern.

The farmer climbed over an iron hurdle and passed through a belt of shrubs and

young trees, planted when the house was built, to screen the outbuildings a little from the lane. He met her at the gate and opened it for her. The outburst was over, though his face was still heated ; she could see the blue veins standing out on his forehead. He was a fine old man, looking bolder and grander in his rage. Iphis could not divest herself of her long-standing admiration of his physique. But now he looked sullen, and in his eyes there was some plaintiveness and wounded love.

‘Come in ; I ant goin’ to fall out wi’ thee. But I’m not goin’ to let thee throw thysen away on such a chap as yon. They tell me he’s fuller o’ mischief than sense. He’s no great shakes a nayther. He’ll niver addle thee a livin’.’

‘Why can’t I hev a sweetheart?’ complained she with petulance and childish obstinacy.

‘Thou may ha’ one, if he’s nobbut o’ the reight sort.’

‘Why isn’t Ephraim o’ the reight sort?’ persisted she.

‘Ho’d thy noise an’ come in, thou bessy.’

Below this wilfulness she had always on hand an extravagant affection for this hard-headed old father. She was obedient from habit, accepting his dicta as authoritative, receiving perversely, but considering wisely.

She was perverse now.

‘If I can’t hev him I’ll ha’ nobody.’

The farmer stared at her mutely ; pausing before he ventured to reply. A gleam of sarcastic ire and cunning gleamed in his eyes.

‘Thou’ll not hev *him*. I’ll see to that.’

Cowlamb refrained from further recrimination. He was a man of few words invariably, but always emphatic. He was satisfied with himself. His mind was made up. He sat in his Windsor arm-chair by the best kitchen fire-place, his hand grasping one arm tenaciously, mentally holding hard his temper

and steadying his perturbed mind. He did not look at Iphis any longer, but relieved himself by glowering sourly at his wife. Mrs. Cowlamb had become acquainted with Iphis's defection, and although she deplored the fact that the young preacher had not made his mark, and was incensed at the time thereof with Iphis, if anything now, although as she put it to herself, 'she didn't matter this new sprunny,' her sympathies went with Iphis. She had seen Iphis and her lover at the foot of the lane, and she had observed somewhat anxiously her husband sauntering deliberately down the hedge side in the field. She was aware that if Iphis still kept with the 'runagate,' Iphis's father must hear their colloquy. And that jarred upon Mrs. Cowlamb's notions of propriety. Lovers ought not to be pestered with spies. When Iphis came in Mrs. Cowlamb could tell that there had been an explosion, but as she felt that between Iphis and herself there was *now* no breach, she did not receive her daughter with bitter, re-

proachful looks. Yet, when she spoke to Iphis, it was in a most colourless, deliberate manner, wholly ignoring her husband's eyes. It intimated to Iphis that the mother's notions of propriety went with her husband's, but that she wished to be neither pillar nor post between them.

Iphis sat like one condemned, watching her father with the look of an animal which resents the chain. She was not one to tide over her troubles or hide her temper with a book ; sitting there under the dominion of plaintive yet relentless eyes inaction gnawed at her heartstrings. She rose to go out again. She passed into the outer kitchen, her father's eye narrowly scrutinising her as she passed along. Her hand was upon the outer door when his voice, loud and authoritative, arrested her, so startling Mrs. Cowlamb that she jumped in her chair.

‘ Iphis, where art tha goin’ now ? ’

‘ Towse’s,’ replied Iphis, rebelliously.

‘ Thou may stop at home, it’s close on



bedtime ; and I wean't ha' thee going there so much.'

Iphis, still dutiful, stopped, leaning with her back now against the kitchen door-jamb. A tear dropped on her cheek, which she dashed away angrily. What had the Towses to do with it all ? Had any girl so cruel a parent ? She began to doubt what she had fondly imagined—her father eventually giving way when he saw that her preference for Ephraim was no passing fancy. Milking time occurred between tea and chapel, or she might have had that as an excuse for getting down to Towse's.

Eventually she exulted. Her father might bar her from encouraging Ephraim to walk home with her, or hinder her from meeting Ephraim in the lane, or going in to Towse's, but he could not help her meeting Ephraim occasionally. He would always be in the singing-loft. There would be moments and long minutes. She could give Ephraim looks

and glances that he would understand. Then she was a little alarmed lest some harsh plan was hatching in her parent's head—he was fell and inexorable if he was religious—of ‘settling’ Ephraim.

The night closed in heavily with her. All went to bed early to wake early, for the morrow harvest was to commence. She lay awake thinking a long time. She did not pull down her blind, and the summer night's light seemed to her comfortless and cheerless. She fell asleep troubled, and woke with an ill dream. The night had come, but there was no real darkness. She could distinguish objects in her room. Everything was so still, but the stillness was oppressive to her. She fell asleep again, and awoke again with a dim presentiment of evil hanging over her. In the morning her father's manner to her did not dispel the shadow that had crept over her mind. He did speak to her, but it was curtly, unconsolatory, yet disconsolately. Cowlamb was miserable himself. The old

cob outside was saddled and waiting patiently, its placid eye winking at early-stirring flies, lifting one foot then another with remonstrative energy, some sharper bite reviving some of the old temper, but the faithful animal never for a moment budging from the spot where its master had left it.

Iphis went out and stroked the nag's neck gently, patted it, placed her finger under the bridle and smoothed its mane; the animal recognising her, raised its nose to her cheek, and returned her caress. She did not repulse it. To her an animal's affection was welcome. The nose was soft as velvet one way if a little harsh the other.

Her father came out—at any other time it would have pleased him to see Iphis fondling his faithful old cob, but now he paid little heed, and mounting, pressed his knees on the saddle. The nag understanding turned, and Cowlamb gave his daughter a look, scrutinising, inflexible, and implying his determina-

tion to have his way and not be trifled with. Iphis met his gaze with a look of appeal, but her father's expression did not soften, so she turned and went into the house, feeling herself a martyr, and more firmly bent on immolating herself. It never crossed her mind to consider whether Ephraim was worth all this ; or whether Ephraim so craven or his love all surface, a word from her father to the blacksmith would be sufficient to deter him from crossing her path again, even to the extent of his becoming a backslider.

Iphis's distress was apparent in the harvest field. Those who connected her trouble with Ephraim as the cause, Farmer Cowlamb as the effect, were not so far to seek, although their surmise might be disturbed with the graciousness shown in hand-shaking. Iphis was in some tremor about her father riding into the village ; he had not told her what his business was there. She had a little compunction about meeting her father now, for she had some desperate news for him in an

envelope. A letter from Sam's housekeeper. Sam's wheat was almost shaking. Sam's foreman dare not start without the word, Sam's manner of being master consisting in not allowing any one on his farm to do anything of any importance unless and until he had ordered it to be done. And Sam had not yet returned from Treminster market, whither he had departed a week ago. He had left no instructions nor sent any. Would the master come over and start all hands? A barnful of Irishmen were waiting. So the letter ran.

Iphis met her father on the turnpike road, the cob walking briskly, as if intelligent enough to understand that life at such a season was important, and time money. Cow-lamb took the letter with something like a dull thud at his heart. He comprehended that Iphis might be in low spirits, but her face revealed other concern and agitation. He read the letter slowly, then looked at her bitterly, and said, with heart-broken emphasis,

‘I doubt I’m goin’ to ha’ some bother wi’ ye all.’

There was injustice to her she felt, and still her father was right. She was near upon casting herself upon the ground and telling him she would be obedient and follow his wishes without any demur. But a tone in his condemnation rankled, her spirit was hot, her pride was great. If she did humble herself he would spurn her. She felt her heart at a white heat, then icy cold, with fear for Sam, for her father, for herself.

The farmer rode through the gate of the wheat-field she held open for him.

‘Towse,’ said he hurriedly, ‘you mun see to things. I mun go look efter yon creatur’. Iphis, tek “Tet” up.’

Towse understood perfectly.

‘I shall ha’ time to catch the train. I s’ll be at Snailhorn sooner than drivin’,’ continued Cowlamb, still hurriedly. ‘Maybe I shan’t git home to-night.’

Iphis stood against the nag’s saddle, the

reins in her hands, and her father, judging that she meant riding, gave her a lift on the horse, and without another word Cowlamb, with head downcast, walked out of the field into the road again.



## CHAPTER 10.

## A BLUE JACKET.

ALTHOUGH little more than twenty miles from the sea as the crow flies, Moortown was an extremely inland town, with but little grasp of phases of life beyond the agricultural. There was some petty trade, but that was conducted feebly, the townspeople were prejudiced, and beyond an occasional trip to the sea they knew little of the life so near to them, the life of seafaring men. They were little less puzzled with those who went down to the sea in ships than the manner in which the way about was known on such a trackless highway. The advent of a sailor in a tar's uniform of blue, and cap with gold letters thereon,

excited no small degree of interest in the town. He was a stranger in the land, for he inquired the way to Willowby.

Ephraim had a horse's hind leg in his lap, and did not look up even when the doorway was filled and his light shadowed. He was accustomed to idlers leaning against the door-jamb, sleepily and silently watching him at his work. He was too intent with hammer and pincers turning the nails he had driven through the horse's hoof to look up.

‘Ephraim, my lad !’

Something familiar in the voice, something affectionate in the tone, caused Ephraim to drop the horse's foot suddenly, to lean, somewhat taken by surprise, on the horse's flank. He could scarcely recover himself for surprise and pleasure.

Bob! Could this tall, well-built fellow be his brother?

He remembered him as a stripling very little taller than himself. Moreover, Ephraim's back having been bent, and labouring dili-

gently, to stand erect suddenly was almost beyond him.

‘Who’d ha’ thowt o’ seein’ thou,’ replied Ephraim, pleasantly. ‘Hes t’ been to Towse’s?’

‘No,’ returned Ephraim’s brother. It was the same voice as Ephraim’s, but brisker and better controlled, sharpened up with discipline. ‘I don’t know where they live. Do they live anywhere near?’

‘When I shoed this owd horse maybe maister ’ll let me go down wi’ thee. We hadn’t so out o’ way throng.’

Ephraim went to the bellows and commenced to blow, turning his back on the fire to be able to regard his brother, whom he had not seen for so many years. He talked, falling in with the motion of his arm up and down and the swaying of his body; it was the habit of an automaton. His face was black with smithy dust, so that his eyeballs shone out with preternatural ghastliness.

Ephraim’s brother did not speak much,

but listened, for it seemed to him that Ephraim's tongue was unloosed, and that ordinarily Ephraim was silent on compulsion and for want of sympathy. Ephraim relinquished the bellows, raked down the fire, throwing on coal and sprinkling on water, then commenced to blow again. Then the shoe was taken out of the fire, a punch hammered into a nailhole—his brother backing from the sparks—and Ephraim hurried to the horse's other hind leg, which he burnt down to fit the shoe.

‘We have smiths on board,’ said the sailor.

‘I wish I was as high as thou,’ said Ephraim.

‘They like little men best—thou’rt high enough for thy job.’

‘Oh, heigh!’ said Ephraim, resignedly.

A semicircle of children, from two feet six downward, had gathered round the doorway. The sailor caught a glimpse of them over his shoulder, and gave a spring out of

the door sideways which dispersed them, a complete rout, to halt again at some distance and survey the new importation with the same fearfulness a flock of sheep may have for a strange or uncouth dog. Warned by such evident fiendish intent they concluded to remain at the safer distance, and those who wished to take off home, having to run the gauntlet of the smithy door, gave it a wide berth, creeping along noiselessly by the hedge until they felt they had gained the moment's advantage when safety might be secured by the celerity of their heels.

The blacksmith at last came up, smiling unctuously. The smart clothes, the figure and carriage inspired Ephraim's master with respect, but his toadyism was tainted with a little patronage. Fine fellow as the sailor might be, the brother was under his thumb.

'I thowt o' astin' leave to go up to Farmer Cowlamb's,' ventured Ephraim, diffidently, not raising his eyes from the horse's frog, 'when I got the owd mare shod.'

‘Thou’rt fond o’ goin’ up to Farmer Cow-lamb’s, hadn’t tha? They tell me—sweet-heartin’? Ephraim’s a droll lad, got convarted, goes a courtin’.’

Ephraim’s brother gave a short, incredulous laugh. He was not much impressed with his brother’s master. There was artificiality in the man’s mirth, as if unaccustomed to mirthfulness with Ephraim, as if now some spleen and jealousy stirred him.

‘Oh, thou can go,’ said Ephraim’s master, with an amount of graciousness Ephraim could scarcely credit his ears. ‘We hadn’t to an hour, an’ if we was thou could make it up. We don’t kill a pig ivery day.’

Ephraim followed up his work briskly, turned the nails, filed the horse’s hoofs, and coated them over with a mixture of tar and grease.

‘Am ee to take the owd mare home?’

‘No, Greenfield ’ll call for it hissen. He’s at the Nag’s Head now.’

Ephraim had hoped to be free of that.

Thus relieved he rushed through the smithy to seek a pump at the back of the house, soused his face and arms, and, with a drop of water at the end of his nose, blundered back again with eyes closed to dry his face with his pocket handkerchief. With but one arm in his jacket, the other to be inserted as they went on their way, he motioned his brother on before him.

‘And how do you get on, Eph? You’ve niver told me,’ asked the brother, with a shrewd surmise that the unctuous master was something of a tyrant.

‘Oh, fairish,’ said Ephraim, cheerfully. ‘I s’ll be glad when I’m lowse. It’s a hungry job ours. He once teld me I owt to work, I eat finely. I filled mysen out one while out of the tatie heap; bud,’ said Ephraim, laughing, ‘one day I cooked ower many on the hot bricks, I heerd him coming, so I just chucked one to the owd cow. I forgot it was hot—law, what a frummety sweat I was in. I thowt I’d killed her for sartin. I pro-



mised mysen I'd chuck her no more, hot or cowl.'

'Thou'rt not afraid on him, Eph?'

'No—not now,' said Ephraim slowly. 'I was one while, he got agate o' cloutin' me. I told him to set his stall out; two, thou knows, can play at that. Law, he's a man for his pennorth, for all he reckons to be a good chapel-goer. I ha' to do his books ivery Sunday morning afore breakfast, if I mean to go to chapel, that's the mischief o' havin' larnt to read an' write. He's a poor hand hissen, he can hardlins saddle a bill. I am not so bad off i' one sense, thoff I am in another. I been worst off for clothes. Uncle Bean, I think he seed I was poor. He ga me a sovereign last May, and I bought a Sunday coat, and a mean un it is.'

'Faither 'd no business to marry again,' declared the sailor, 'if he meant to have another family. He'd better have let you gone out to sarvice. He could have married an oldish woman, if it was a housekeeper he

wanted. A foreman ought not to be so bad off. But I can see, I can see ; she spends all she can rap and rear.'

'How is it thou got here sooner?' asked Ephraim.

'I found out it was time I went ; the poor owd chap's right, but when you fancy somebody's watching every mouthful you get, you don't feel comfortable, and then a lot o' poor little baens, and all up o' sixes and sevens. Why, lad,' said the sailor, brightening with a happy thought, 'there's my clothes—they'll all be in the box I left behind me.'

'She'll ha' cutten 'em up by this.'

'Nay, she won't. Aunt Towse has the key ; she had it, however. We shall see. When I took off to sea, I sent it in a letter to her.'

'It's at home.'

'I'll see thou has it. I shall go home and see faither before I go back to sea.'

'How much longer ha' ye?' -

'Leave?—a fortnight. It's a queer-looking

customer our ship, I can tell you. One would almost wonder she floated. She is more in water than out. She's like a floating fort. We scarcely know where we are going, but I think it'll be Mediterranean.'

'Blowed if I know where that be,' said Ephraim, candidly.

'When one's been on a foreign station, they reckon to put one on a home station, but I'd as lieve be away. A home station, maybe one's as tied and far enough away from any kin. I shouldn't mind if we had a welt in with this new ship.'

'D—— it,' said Ephraim, 'ya might git killed yarsen, Bob.'

'Hollo, young fellow,' said the sailor, thunderstruck; 'I thowt the maister said you was religious.'

'Dal it, I forgot,' said Ephraim, feeling his character was at stake.

'And what about that sweetheartin', young fellow?' asked the sailor brother, poking Ephraim mischievously in the ribs.

‘Why, it’s maister’s—and still it isn’t,’ said Ephraim, candidly. ‘You know, I believe they’re jealous as sin o’ me, ’cause I gone part way home wi’ th’ lass on a Sunday night.’ Ephraim blushed through his fireburn. ‘We’ve hed a word or two an’ all afore, as I have been coming away fra Towse’s.’ Ephraim’s brother was regarding him with a look of surprise.

‘Why, it isn’t the farmer’s daughter Towse is with? Ephraim, thou’rt going to do well; stick to the lass. Thou mustn’t let her slip through thy fingers.’

‘I’d knaw, th’ owd man doesn’t look so amiable at one as he used to do.’

‘When thou wast first convarted,’ said the sailor, cynically, imitating the blacksmith’s broader speech.

‘Hadn’t thou a sweetheart once?’ posed Ephraim. ‘I ain’t forgot. Didn’t you, first time you come ower, show me some hair—a lovers’ knot—what became on her?’

‘I’d know; married somebody else, I’s think.’ There was a tone of sorrowfulness,

not unmixed with bitterness, that did not escape Ephraim. Ephraim felt that he was trespassing on fenced-in ground.

‘ Our maister’s son’s at Moortown’s larnin’ to be a draper ; he paid a mort o’ money with him ; he used to do his writing. He’s turning out a preacher, which looks to me like a lot o’ money wasted. Bud, if they got him a rich young woman——’

‘ Like your lass? ’

‘ I wodn’t say they’ve set their eyes on her, it ’ud be a madness for ’em to see a common chap like me walking off with her, and them a long while finding one of the right sort.’

The sailor rapped out a sailor’s expletive, and admonished his brother by all that was secular to follow her up.

‘ She’s not a waster,’ said Ephraim enthusiastically, ‘ thou’ll be sure to see her—why, she’d fit thou, I believe Bob, better nor me. If she was to fancy thee afore me, don’t be scar’d o’ me, I wodn’t mind so much if t’ was

thou,' Ephraim regarding such a not unlikely *contretemps* philosophically.

'Pshoo, lad, I don't want thy sweet-heart.'

'It's like feightin',' argued Ephraim; 'if you put in a cut for somebody, put in two for yarsen. You wouldn't ha' to go sailing no more wi' all her money.'

'Nay, when you marry her, maybe I shall be tired by then; the owd man 'll put you in a farm, and I'll come and work for you.'

'Aye, aye, that's very fine talkin', better riding than walking. He caught me wi' my ame round her o' Sunday neet, and he hes to saddle wi' me for that. I'd knaw what he means to do.'

'Phew,' whistled the sailor; 'then it *isn't* all plain sailing?'

'Why, yon's him!' exclaimed Ephraim under his breath. 'Ho'd hard abit Bob, let him git on.'

Something in Cowlamb's weary walk excited Ephraim's wonder. The farmer was

not hurrying, but he walked like a hopeless, despairing man.

‘He’s a fine old chap,’ said the sailor, ‘higher than I am, I believe.’

‘He is,’ said Ephraim, measuring his brother with his eye. ‘Here, we’ll go in at this gate; they gotten well started into harvestin’. I come and did a bit o’ pickin’ last year. I se think he wean’t ha’ me t’ year. There’s Towse, sithee, by goms, he’s going in.’

The women were the first to look up. There was something for a woman to admire in the stalwart sailor, picturesque, spotlessly clean, and the element of careless hardihood in the open throat and loose knot. Then the men turned more slowly.

‘Be that him?’ inquired the village wiseacre.

‘I’ll uphold it, it’s Bob,’ said Towse.

‘An’ Ephraim, he’s catched owd Braddy i’ fine fettle to hap his fire,’ said one of the women, shrewdly.



‘Where’s Joel?’ inquired Towse as the brothers approached.

‘Law, he was here a minute sin’.

‘Here he is,’ said a woman dragging the unwilling urchin from behind a couple of prone sheaves; ‘he’s hidin’. What ails the baen? Why th’ baen’s scared; he weant hot thee?’

The arrival had terrified Joel. A policeman was Joel’s *bête noire*. The threat of fetching one to check his infantile wilfulness or quell loud wailing had not been used vainly. Joel imagined his ogre had come at last—a martinet of an uncommonly vicious order. Joel had been most forward, Towse threatening him direly, and storming at his absent wife for not keeping the ‘brat at home.’ Joel began to weep silently. Loud wailing and his general bad conduct had precipitated the catastrophe.

‘We seed th’ owd man goin’ down the road or we wodn’t ha’ come in,’ said Ephraim, apologetically.

‘Thou wodn’t, thou means,’ said the

garthman, sternly, 'if all be true I hear. Thou gits into hobbles thysen often enow. Nobbut mind thou doesn't drag nobody else in. It mudn't be comfortable for us moving this time o' year.'

'I s'll noan git thou into no hobbles. I couldn't keep out on 'em mysen if I tried iver so, it seems to me.'

Ephraim talked in a propitiatory way. He knew Towse was never very amiable when working hard.

'My lad I nowt agean thee, mind,' said Towse.

'Thou'st good-tempered when clean,' said Ephraim.—'What's th' owd man piked off so sour about?'

'Not about thee,' returned Towse, cynically. 'It's his son this time that's putten' him out, gone off a drinking an' worse maybe, an' corn shaking.'

'Now he owt ta git married,' said the elderly man from the village in a wheedling voice.

‘Bud,’ said Towse, exasperated at mortal obliquity, ‘it just isn’t him as isn’t married, but him as is.’

‘O—ah!’ ejaculated the wise man, collapsing.

‘Maister says he’s done all he could to git the t’other to marry as isn’t, for fear he should start an’ all, but he weant. Marryin’ made t’other chap worse, I think. It’s sich an a lottery is marrying; some gits good uns, some gits bad uns, mostlins they’re bad uns to the fore. They don’t bring ’em up reight nowadays; no bellies for work—no bellies for work.’

‘They’d like it stattus all the year round, an’ wear fine hats an’ ha’ plenty o’ money i’ their pockets to spend.’

‘What d’ya know about it?’ rasped out Caroline, impatiently contemptuous. ‘Men, what are they? Allus at alehouse, wishing pints were as big as chimbley pots.’

‘Heigh, old lad!’ cried Hosea in delight.

The ancient was notorious for his partiality for the Nag's Head and the Brown Cow.

Towse at last recollected that he had never thought good to address his nephew by marriage, extend to him hospitality, inquire after his health, and trim his face up complaisantly.

‘How a’ ta?’ said Towse at last, cordially. ‘Thou’lt find the missis at home; thou’lt feel edgish if thou’s hed nowt sin’ thou left home. Will tha hev a drink o’ beer; it’s sore wesh, but it’s sich as it is,’ and Towse made for the jug embedded in a sheaf.

‘No; I’m not thirsty. I musn’t keep thou beyond thy hour, Eph,’ said the sailor, turning to Ephraim.

‘Oh, don’t bother thy heead about me,’ responded this most careless individual, in his happiest mood. Ephraim never cared a straw for prospective trouble.

At this moment Iphis Cowlamb, having stalled her father’s horse and replenished its

crib with hay, lingered outside the house for some few minutes. She had a little of her father's suspicious nature. When the cat's away the mice play, her father was wont to observe sardonically. She went to the house corner and shading her eyes looked down upon the corn-field. Actually—they were—all at a standstill. They knew that her father was now well out of the way, and they were taking advantage of his absence. She had always had faith in Towse, he was left in charge, he ought to see to the others—but he was only mortal after all.

A woman moved aside, Iphis had observed a peculiarity over her head, now she could tell it was the head of some one in dark clothes.

‘Mother!’ she cried, ‘mother, come here!’

‘Why, what?’ said Mrs Cowlamb, without a vestige of interest, not looking up from the milk pansion she was wiping before placing on the rack outside the door.

‘ Here’s somebody i’ th’ corn-field in blue clothes—it isn’t a sowjer!’

‘ A sowjer!’ ejaculated Mrs. Cowlamb, now a little roused, sufficiently, however, to seek the side of her daughter, wiping her hands on her apron as she walked. She shaded her eyes as Iphis was doing. There they stood side by side as if saluting.

‘ Dost t’ knaw who t’ is?’

‘ No,’ said Iphis, ‘ I mun go see.’

‘ No, thou moant. Thou’rt allus so rannish. Stop at home. What would they think o’ thee? Besides, thou’d better mind what thou’rt about, thou knaws thy faither’s gone off i’ fine fettle.’ Mrs. Cowlamb spoke desperately, in plaintive monotone. She felt the heavy responsibility of this wilful girl on her hands.

Iphis replied with a toss of her head.

‘ I will go see who it is. It might be somebody I know.’

When Mrs. Cowlamb looked around Iphis had already started for the corn-field.

‘Well, well,’ muttered she, despairingly, ‘if she will make a rod for her own back—I done all I can.’

In Iphis’s mind her mother’s words still lingered, but like an echo, an echo of some one else’s. Her father’s word would have been law; her mother’s went to the winds. Iphis ran at full speed while she felt she could do so without being observed by the people below. When she knew that she was well in sight, she steadied herself, gathered in her breath, walking sedately, assuming a discreet and most guarded expression.

She was soon observed. A woman below turned and spoke to Ephraim.

‘Yon’s thy lass a comin’.’

‘His lass,’ said Towse witheringly, ‘she’ll niver hev him!’

‘What did the lass say,’ said Caroline, with a pause to excite interest, ‘when they reckoned she shouldn’t hev her chap? She said she’d nayther be oblivated nor yit consuaded, bud she’d hev her own possolute way.’



‘What did she mean?’ asked Hosea, slowly.

‘Why, she’d hev him if he hedn’t a rag to his back.’

‘O—ah!’ returned Hosea, quenched.

‘Now, lads,’ cried Towse, impatiently, vexed at the reference to Ephraim and Iphis, a little disconcerted that Iphis should come upon them all at a standstill, so soon after her father had left them; ‘we mun make up for lost time.’

He heard Iphis’s voice, speaking to him hurriedly.

‘Towse! Sithee—here’s that lass drinking the men’s beer.’

‘Heigh, saving time,’ commented Ephraim. Iphis had reached his elbow.

Iphis laughed, but Towse was indignant. He did not approve of the beer going up in that way, good or bad.

‘Heigh, guts; thou great greedy guts. Palethorpe, that’s thy lass, I believe.’

‘’Tis, awiver. Law, Liz likes beer,’ said

Palethorpe, calmly. 'But it's not a bit o' use vennerin' at her, she'd threap ye out on it she'd never hed a drop.'

Towse was scarcely satisfied with Palethorpe's easy way at looking at disaster. He commenced to work vigorously, muttering savagely the treatment Liz would have had from him if she had been one of his.

'How's them Irish gettin' on, Towse?' asked Iphis, to say something, but her eyes admiringly sweeping the outline of the picturesque and stalwart fellow with Ephraim.

'Oh, they'll bide a bit. The maister's been to them. It's all tek work.' Towse turned with serious face to his fellow-workers. 'We mun git on or them Irish 'll git the wind on us.'

Iphis was now standing close to Ephraim's brother; Ephraim feeling a little mortified that she had no eyes at all for him now. He spoke, she smiled absently, her eyes remaining fixed on the taller brother. Her face was lit up with admiration—but not for him.

Ephraim had graciously offered to forego his claim, but now he felt that it would be with some soreness. The green-eyed monster was already asserting itself. She stood hand in palm, her attitude would have been ridiculous but for the bright look of interest in her eyes. She read the gold letters on his cap. She noted the brawny, open throat, the careless knot, the wide full trousers, and his easy careless pose.

‘You’re Ephraim’s brother, then ? I didn’t know he had a brother—he never told me.’

‘Yes, I’m his brother ; I’m the oldest,’ he returned a little awkward in his explanation.

‘Do you like it ?’

‘Like what ?’

‘Being a sailor.’

‘Yes—I’m forced to like it. But I do like it ; I wanted to go to sea.’

‘But should you like it if there was to be war ? The ship might sink—it must be dreadful.’

‘ I don’t know.’

‘ You haven’t been in any fightin’ yet, then ?’

‘ No.’

‘ Nor don’t want ?’

‘ No, not particular.’

‘ You would like to have one battle, and come out safe. I’d rather be horse sowjer, and just have one battle, and come out safe. I think it must be a dele safer on land.’

‘ You mightn’t come out safe there.’

‘ Then I shouldn’t like to go. I’se think you aint so much to do as sowjers.’

‘ Oh, it’s not the idle life anybody would think. If there isn’t work, they make some. We have to be drilled nearly the same.’

‘ Oh, have you ?’ said Iphis, surprised. ‘ I thought all you had to do was to wrap the sails up when it blew over hard, and stand on the poles, same as I saw ’em at Haveluck once, when the Prince o’ Wales come.’

‘ Bob, I’ll see thee up to Towse’s,’ inter-

rupted Ephraim in a whisper ; ‘ then I mun go back.’

‘ Thou’rt hiped,’ said Towse, with a chuckle. It was but a whisper, but Iphis heard it.

‘ Nay, I hadn’t,’ asseverated Ephraim, quickly.

‘ Thou needn’t bother, Ephraim ; I’ll go wi’ him. If you was to ’list, Ephraim, one would be a sailor and tother a sowjer ; bud you hadn’t big enough.’

Towse was in the seventh heaven of delight hearing Iphis taking Ephraim down a peg or two, and Ephraim felt himself disparaged and thrown over. Well, she was fancying Bob all in a hurry ; she had taken her time with him ; she had not shown him favour so suddenly.

His brother’s eyes turned kindly on him. The sailor was older, sharpened with discipline, contact ; he had a firm mouth and chin, rather thoughtful, far-reaching eyes, and evidently was a quick, observant fellow.

‘Thy hour must be gone, Eph. I don’t want thee to get into any scrapes. I’ll come down to-night when work’s done. She’s a fine lass,’ whispered he aside, ‘I could like her mysen—nay, nay, don’t be jealous, Eph. What could I do with her?’

‘I ant,’ said Ephraim, ‘bud thou may hev her if she will ha’ thee. I’d rather thou, if it was onybody else but me.’

‘Take no notice, ’tis a lass’s way to flout her sweetheart afore other folks.’

‘What’s he whisperin’ about?’ demanded Iphis, jealously.

‘Oh,’ said the sailor, ‘I dursn’t tell you.’

‘If it’s anything about me, it’s all stories.’

‘Oh, it’s not stories,’ said the sailor, seriously.

Iphis was determined to know from Ephraim the purport of this whispered intercourse.

Ephraim watched them up the field—his brother erect and tall, but with a sailor’s roll; Iphis tall and lithesome and slender. They

were made for each other, he was fain to think, and he could not stifle his soreness.

‘Here, get thee gone ; thou’ll hev owd Brad natterin’ at thee. It’s not the way to git another odd hour,’ cried Towse.

Other eyes were watching—Mrs. Cowlamb had not stirred from the house front. Here was Iphis bringing somebody up—a soldier of all folks. If Iphis was going to take up with him, it would be a worse catastrophe than her freak with Ephraim Sparrow. What lives soldiers did lead, especially those among whom Mr. Macwhortle had laboured and failed to bring in.

She saw that Iphis was diverging from the farmhouse ; she now wondered to which of the farm labourers he belonged. She felt a little more assured when she saw that Iphis was simply showing him the way. She hoped the ‘sowjer’ would not stay long, but then Cowlamb would be home in ‘a day or two, and if Iphis didn’t behave herself he would ‘reightle’ her.



## CHAPTER 11.

## DANGEROUS GROUND.

COWLAMB was at his own farm again by eleven o'clock of the following forenoon. He had come direct from Moortown railway station. He was sour and perturbed, as Mrs. Cowlamb expected he would be. She wisely said nothing beyond—

‘Thou’s gotten back.’

Leaving him to speak and question, she content to reply and answer. The farmer looked round for Iphis, then recollected that it was market day, and that to save time he had come by the rural back road of the town, and so had seen nothing of the market stir.

‘Who took her butter and eggs?’

‘The sowjer!’

‘What sowjer,’ demanded Cowlamb, abruptly.

‘Well, he’s not exactly a sowjer, though he sarves the Queen. He’s come to Towse’s.’

She could not tell whether her husband was displeased or dispassionate. He was drying his hands on the towel before sitting down to a hastily improvised luncheon.

‘Yon creatur’ goes on nicely,’ said the farmer, with his eyes on his plate, ‘I’d knaw what’s goin’ to ’come on him. It wasn’t so afore he married that fine wife. His house-keeper’s gen him a month’s warning, she’ll be gone i’ three weeks. What’s to be done?’

‘They’ll never make it up?’ hazarded Mrs. Cowlamb.

‘What! Him and his wife?’ shouted her husband, ‘not they. He was a dele ower rannish and lungeous,’ added he, despairingly; ‘Iphis ’ll ha’ to go.’

‘Iphis!’ Mrs. Cowlamb almost allowed a dish to slip through her fingers; recovering

it she continued, 'I'm suer it's no place for her. Him coming home at all hours.'

'He'd be different if she was there, maybe.'

'They're bad to hold in, once they get started.'

'What do you know about it, woman?' cried her husband, irately. Although he could disparage his son himself, he could not brook others condemning him. He felt that if this wife of his had been the lad's mother she would now have been making excuses for him.

'Well, well,' said Mrs. Cowlamb with subservient acerbity, 'one can't say a word without having one's head bitten off. I said nowt agean him.'

'Bud you would wi' very little coaxing.'

'Let Iphis go, then,' assented she resignedly; 'she's as much yours as mine. If you can bear her to be there I can. I used to think you was very choice on her.'

'An' hadn't ee?' demanded Cowlamb, bringing his hand down upon the table

heavily. 'Who's done more for her than I have? Who's done more for his baens than me, eh?'

Mrs. Cowlamb felt the futility of reply. She filled both her hands with dishes and retired into her sanctuary, the pantry. He knew he was blowing up a storm in a teacup, and that his wife could not help Sam's misdeeds, and that he did not like Iphis going himself.

If he could have beheld Iphis returning from market, and her escort, what would he have said or thought? Iphis had been proud enough of her gallant. She recollected now hearing Mrs. Towse once allude to a nephew who was on shipboard, but she always pictured him as a swabby marine, like those she had seen in Haveluck—disreputable-looking undersized redcoats, but he was a blue-jacket. She did think the willow baskets, though tied down neatly with spotless white napkins, looked somewhat out of place on his arms. She had bestowed some little extra attention

on her dress, and then she felt that she scarcely looked equal to her cavalier. For the nonce Ephraim was forgotten. She had reckoned upon creating quite a sensation among the market folks. Nearing the town they met many people. She felt proud. The fine elms and horse chestnuts skirting either side of the road in all their summer glory of leaf contributed, she knew, to the luminosity of the picture. Her cavalier left her at the butter market entrance with a nod and smile, promising to look in occasionally. When she was ready to return he would carry her baskets back. She had some marketing to do—the empty baskets to fill with shop things. Busy shopping she was continually catching a glimpse of him threading his way through the knots of people—burly farmers showing samples of last year's corn, their wives and daughters gossiping; all turned to look at him, and to ponder over his rolling gait. Their eyes met at every rencontre.

He judged at last that she must be nearly

ready for home. She came out of a shop with her basket heavy with groceries and linen goods. She placed it on the ground at her feet, counting over change she held in her hand. He approached her and took up a basket. It was all pretence, but she appeared to only just grasp the fact that he was near. Eyes around she knew were attentive, ears contiguous she knew were alert. The remarks would not have surprised her.

‘Oh ! owd Sam Cowlamb’s dowter’s a gallas un.’

‘Now, fancy if that gay chap hooks off wi’ her !’

‘I wodn’t be a bit surprised.’

‘He’s clapping love to her ear, sithee.’

‘Who is he, an’ what is he ? He’s a fine lashin’ chap !’

‘They do say there’s been a bit of a tift on already about some common chap.’

‘Well, if I was a young chap ——’

‘Aye, but thou hadn’t. An’ then thou mud be as fur off as t’art now.’

Where there is smoke there is fire. Iphis gave some occasion for all this quizzing. She rather enjoyed it ; and her saucy eye was met by one equally quick.

‘ Here, I’ll carry this,’ said he.

‘ It’s a shame.’

‘ Oh, no.’

‘ I’ll be dal’d if he ant goin’ to carry her basket,’ muttered a spy.

‘ That looks like seeing on her home——  
Ha’ ye seen th’ owd man about ? ’

‘ Awhile agone, i’ th’ back street, hotchin’ off home, sour as wig.’

Iphis and her gallant walked past them. They had the flags to themselves until they reached an inn-door where many congregated. Every head turned, Iphis tossed hers defiantly.

‘ I should think you think yoursen a fine fellow,’ said she, mischievously.

‘ What will other people think ? I have as great an opinion of myself as you have of yourself.’



Iphis coloured at the retort. At the town-end Iphis began to reveal the mischief in her.

‘I’ll help you to carry this basket,’ said she, passing her arm through the handle. This brought them closer ; any one might have imagined them walking arm-in-arm, but when any one approached near enough to be certain, Iphis withdrew her arm decorously.

‘You ant so much like,’ said Iphis, mentally comparing the brothers ; ‘you’re bigger.’

‘Not better.’

‘No, maybe not. I aint much opinion o’ sowjers an’ sailors. I wouldn’t believe one any further than I could throw him.’

‘How far could you throw me ?’

‘I’m not going to try.’

‘I think we are very straight.’

‘As straight as a bent pin.’

‘I had an idea you were a droll girl.’

‘You are getting very free, Mister sailor. I shall not come up to Towse’s while you are staying there.’

‘ I’ll send one of the bairns to let you know when I am going out.’

‘ Oh, don’t put yourself to that trouble on my account.’

Every caustic retort one or other dragged at the basket, one or other being pulled to an extremity of the footpath. The man’s strength prevailed ; he would not allow her to withdraw her arm. At last she cried for mercy.

‘ Well, walk as a lady should. You’ll not be so torn down when we get in sight of the house.’

‘ Do you think I’m afraid? No—— What a queer cap it is you wear. Are the gold letters sewn on ? How would a woman look in it ?’

‘ Try it on if you like.’

‘ No ; I shouldn’t like.’

‘ Yes, do. Do—now,’ begged he persuasively. His face was eloquent. She had a long time coveted it, if but for a moment. ‘ There’s nobody in sight.’

He placed down the basket and held his cap in his hand, the other hand was on her

shoulder. Iphis coquettishly removed her own hat, and a moment after the sailor's impulse was to snatch a kiss.

It was what she expected. It was what she really had tempted him to do. She threw his cap in his face, she pushed him away. Forgetful of the basket, he stumbled over it, overturning it. Several packages rolled out upon the footpath ; one burst in the basket, a large paper bag, and the contents—rice—scattered on the path.

‘Now you have made a mess,’ said she, sternly.

‘It was all you.’

‘You began it, and you ought to pick it all up. What will mother say ?’

‘But the bag has burst.’

‘Turn it upside down and put it in at the other end.’

‘It is a good thing the road is not dirty.’

‘I expect you’ll get grits in, and all our teeth ’ll be edged.’

She did not offer to help him. She stood

by carelessly, readjusting her hat. While thus occupied a pedestrian passed them. She looked after the man and was somewhat taken aback, discerning her father's coadjutor in the stewardship of the chapel. Seeing her replacing her hat, her companion gathering up the scattered rice, he would judge there had been some scuffle. He might be mischievous enough to go to her father with some tale of her romping, hint that her conduct was scarcely in consonance with the character of a convert, or of a modest maiden. More decorously she carried herself as they proceeded up the lane. Her father might have reached home, be scouring the country with his glass, and she recollected the lapse which had excited her father was yet but a few days old. She was certain that he would not be in the best of humours ; it was an open question whether he would view this relative of Towse's as a proper escort for her.

Cowlamb had finished his luncheon, and was coming out of the house just as they were

approaching it. He stopped a moment to examine Iphis's companion. With all Cowlamb's hard-headedness, he had an eye for colour and contour, also some reverence for men who had been beyond seas, and sojourned in far lands. A missionary was the most acceptable guest at his house.

Cowlamb eyed the stranger so graciously, Iphis was astonished. He even waited for them to come up, and took the baskets in.

'Come in, sowjer ! Now, will ye have a glass o' beer ?'

'Thank you, sir,' replied Ephraim's brother, gratefully and politely.

'Draw a pitcher of beer, Missis,' said Cowlamb. 'Come in, sowjer !'

Mrs. Cowlamb was amazed, but she seemed pleased to take the pitcher and go down into the cellar.

'There,' said the farmer, pouring from a great height, 'that's a glass o' good beer out on a cowl cellar.'

Iphis sat down by the long table before

the window, took off her hat and held it in her lap, breathing wearily.

‘It’s hot, oh deary me, I’m nigh melted.’

‘And the sowjer hugged thy baskets. Why thou fowt, what has t’ done to harry thysen,’ said her father in his best manner. He was jocular, blunt humour in his eyes, banter on his lips. Thus was it always; if he left home for a day full of fault-finding, if he returned sour and cross, all his ill-temper vanished at the sight of Iphis.

‘You’re related to Towse’s wife, hadn’t ye? Goin’ to stop a bit. We’re throng harvestin’. I can gie ye a job if you like.’

‘Oh, I shouldn’t mind,’ but the sailor looked at his clothes.

‘Ah, thou’rt scar’d o’ thy fine clothes. If t’ spoilt ’em, thou’d git into trouble. Stand up. —Why, thou’d be fitted easy, thou’rt nigh as high as me. I’ll find thee. Towse mun lend thee a smock—eh, what d’ye say? An’ stop and hev a bit o’ dinner wi’ us, all in a plain way. That’ll save Towse’s; there’s a

lot o' baens that wants filling there, I know, an' Towse is a trusty fellow.'

Iphis looked up in the greatest astonishment ; her mother, too, regarded the speaker blankly, as if through trouble his senses were going. Then she shook her head to herself ; her husband had always some ' deep fetch ' at the bottom of his generosity. Iphis sat up briskly, forgetting her sudden sense of lassitude, wondering whether her father realised that this was Ephraim Sparrow's brother.

Farmer Cowlamb certainly had not comprehended that. After a moment's reflection, Iphis felt sure that her father had not realised it, unless he had some crafty motive. If he was an innocent man, Iphis felt ready to laugh in her sleeve. What an opportunity for her ! —and she would take it. She would flirt with this new Phœbus—draw him on to admiration and infatuation. She had seen his eyes glisten. He was very quiet, and had a sunburned, oppressed look on his forehead, indicating that he had been under the rays of a



hot sun; but she saw a gleam of Ephraim when he attempted to kiss her. What fun to enjoy Ephraim's discomfiture! Of course, in her mind she would place a line of demarcation he must not overstep. She checked herself. What if she were to cause the brothers to quarrel! But she flattered herself that she could prevent or bridge that over, she liked both too well to cause an estrangement. She should give the sailor to understand that she was Ephraim's sweetheart, but torture poor Ephraim with agonies of fear and doubt, and still hold him in hand with a look of reproach, were he disposed to look with the eyes of Cain on his brother. Poor Ephraim! she reasoned that it was quite proper he should be drawn through the fires of purification, have all his bad tempers, if he had any, purged out of him, and after a period of humiliation be exalted.

## CHAPTER 12.

## COQUETTING.

EPHRAIM SPARROW's brother went away from Farmer Cowlamb's somewhat surprised at his reception. Had Ephraim, his aunt Towse, Towse himself, magnified a passing displeasure of the farmer's? Mrs. Cowlamb that morning had sent over to Mrs. Towse for some one to carry down Iphis's baskets, and he had volunteered. Thereupon Mrs. Towse had entered into a diffuse narrative of events and analysis of character. He walked back to Towse's contemplating the extraordinary turn of affairs. It was natural they would be civil—he had rendered them a service, if a slight one. He rather liked the farmer, brusque as he was. His aunt Towse

had said he was far from being a churl if any one looked to him for help.

‘He hates to see folks making bones about what they do,’ said she.

Not oddly, his thoughts went from the father to the daughter. She was audacious, but he considered she was not of the sensuous. A fine girl—bold, and brave, and pure; if he could marry her he should wish to be something different to what he was. But no, he could not reach her. Then he recollected that Ephraim had, but perhaps it was only a passing show of favour. Towse and his wife had railed at Ephraim’s folly imagining himself good enough for her, or that Cowlamb would ever yield. He wondered if Ephraim invested her with the admiration he already had for her. He wished Ephraim had not talked so resignedly of yielding her up to him, if her fancy turned lightly as a weathercock. He was grateful to the farmer for his cordiality, for his generosity; Cowlamb would have him smoke, and

brought out a spirit bottle. But Cowlamb was hungry for information, and although his guest was not a *raconteur*, the farmer looked upon the odd hour after dinner as one of the most entertaining hours he had ever wasted in his life.

A smile was on Robert Sparrow's face when he met his aunt, and told her how well he had been treated.

'He looked on you like a gentleman ; well your job is a good dele above a hedge-plasher's,' commented she.

'Do you really think so ?' laughed he.

'To be suer I do. Why, if it had been a haw-baw like Eli or Hosey, they'd been sent off hafe an hour afore her, or else sent efter her, as if they wasn't good enough to tread the same ground. Thou come in eppen.'<sup>1</sup>

'Wush, wush, missis,' said Towse at his dinner.

'Way, woth thee, thou hardlins durst hear thysen speak. A cat may look at a king.'

<sup>1</sup> Handy.

‘Heigh,’ said Towse, ‘words travel with the wind a’most. But sit thee down an’ hev a bit o’ dinner.’

‘Nay,’ said Robert, ‘I been telling aunt he asked me to have beer, and then I had dinner.’

‘What !’ ejaculated Towse, his knife and fork emphasising perpendicularly his surprise. ‘Some folks long for cheese when they’ve none in the house, but when there’s no lack then is their desire gone,’ added Towse, with a cheerful determination to take surprises philosophically ; at the same time imagining the latter part of his sentence a quotation from Scripture, to the point, and his memory commendable.

‘I’m going to help you folks in the morning,’ said Robert, expecting to surprise them more.

‘Thou’ll spoil thy clothes. Why, now, look at thy cap, it is all road-muck. Niver mind, I’ll brush it.’

‘They’re going to lend me clothes.’

‘Thou’rt in luck’s way,’ said Mrs. Towse.

‘I’ll knaw what sort on a morning ’twill be. It’ll teem down wi’ rain afore very long. That makes th’ owd chap anxious. Well, I moant dawdle here. Get’s some drink, missis. He’s home and down agean by this. Law, thou’rt i’ high feather, Bobby.’

The weather-wise garthman was not far to seek in forecast. Before the afternoon was over there floated up small black clouds like tufts of coarse black wool or curls of smoke, ‘water-whelps’ Towse called them. These increased in size, floated wildly across the sky, gathered together, eventually obscuring the sun. No relief from heat was felt; the air was clammy, overpowering; languor succeeded parchedness. At last large rain-drops pattered down, each at a respectful distance from its neighbour. Cowlamb continued eyeing the threatening sky nervously, and not with thankfulness.

‘I hope we hadn’t going to have it weat!’

‘I hope not for sartain,’ said Towse.

‘The A’mighty does as He likes,’ said

Cowlamb, 'bud I wish it was a sparing time, this time o' year.'

'They say it all comes for good—i' th' end, but it's amazing aggravating at th' time.'

'Drop it,' said the farmer at last, shaking his head ominously, as the rain came thicker, faster, and now closer together; 'git all up ye can. I mun be off to yon Irishmen.'

'It'll come on heavy, I'll uphold it,' said Towse.

Towse was correct in his judgment. The night closed in gloomily enough, shower succeeding shower, a settled downpour steadily flushing the parched earth. The farmer sank into a dismal humour, meeting trouble more than half way, seeing his crops that year ruined, Sam's too—sprouting, stooks growing fast to the ground, and stacks rotting and heating until they blazed. There was nothing for him but to sit in the house thus brooding, thinking again about Iphis and Sam. He was too sore to speak of his son to his wife—too proud. He had been



so boastful of Sam's cleverness and abilities to her ; he had prophesied with too much certainty of Sam's future prosperity and standing. She was not Sam's mother, he always considered ; she was Iphis's. She could not have a mother's feeling for him—it was natural she should place her ' ain bairn ' first. He had not placed the other lad anything like so high as Sam. He had always considered the elder first, and the younger was always given to understand that Sam was first, and first to be considered. And this was his return ! Cowlamb's invidiousness was brought home to him with bitterness. Is it not so ? Do we not too often centre our hearts and affections the most strongly upon the one who shall cause us the most trouble and woe, giving but scant love and appreciation to the dutiful and law abiding ?

Cowlamb sat silently eating out his own heart while the women sewed. The click of their needles was necessary to him ; it was

the familiar sound at night time ; the sight of the work-basket always made the evening seem thrifty. Had they sat idle this night his unrest would have been more pronounced. Their occupation was evidence of a proper employment of spare hours.

At ten o'clock in the summer, at nine in the winter, the household retired, the servant girl always leaving the kitchen one hour before them. That hour matters were discussed which could not be ventilated in the girl's presence, for although she sat at a respectful distance, in a shadowed corner, Cowlamb believed the lass's ears were pertinaciously set to gather in crumbs of information. When the girl had gone, Cowlamb turned to his daughter.

‘ What does t’ say to going back to Snailhorn—to keep Sam’s house ? ’

‘ Snailhorn ? ’ questioned Iphis.

‘ I spoke plain, didn’t ee ? ’ said her father curtly.

‘ Am I going ? ’

‘ I don’t knaw, we s’ll see. He can’t get along by hissen. Thou used to reckon thou’d raither be at Snailhorn than here.’

Iphis recollected that well, but now her wishes in that respect were somewhat modified.

There was half an hour’s silence, during which neither woman looked up, Iphis occasionally biting off her thread, while her mother cut it with the scissors, Cowlamb’s eyes directed into the fire-grate. Both suddenly looked up, for the farmer having stealthily unlaced his boots, now kicked them off, and stooping down carried them away in his hand to their proper position for the night. He marched across the floor.

‘ Where art ee goin’ ? ’ asked Mrs. Cowlamb.

‘ To bed, to be suer,’ answered he tartly.

‘ Then we’ll go an all,’ said she agreeably.

‘ Iphis, put the basket away. Thou can finish thy work another night.’

It was against all rule sitting up after the

head of the house thought good to seek his couch. On rare occasions, exceptions had been attempted, but every ten minutes his voice would be heard demanding the cause of delay, warning them they would be asleep when they should be awake, railing because of improvident lamp-burning. There was no rest for them or for him.

‘Thy faither’s hed a long day, an’s harried and worried, Iphis; he’s dog-tired,’ excused Mrs. Cowlamb.

‘One always has to bundle off just when it suits him to go, whether one’s ready to go or not,’ complained Iphis, peevishly, but obeying.

‘Well, well, thou’s lived long enough to know his ways.’

‘I don’t want to go to Snailhorn,’ declared Iphis, ‘and be in the house wi’ that drunken Sam.’

‘I don’t suppose he’ll force thee to go.’

But Iphis was not so confident of this. Morning came with a clear sky but a watery

chill in the air, as if the cessation of rain might only be regarded as temporary. As Iphis was dressing she heard voices in the lane. She looked out of the window, and her eyes rested upon a group of the men, the Irish and English labourers, in colloquy. Their position was pleasing and picturesque. Trees in that particular spot still remained on either side of the road, reasons for such charity lying in the conviction that on one side of the lane they screened the house, on the other they were on a less vandalistic farmer's holding. The early sunlight through the openings flooded patches with refreshing and exhilarating effect. The men had their gathering rakes and other tools, a few lads stood with stone jugs on their backs, which they held painfully, the string cutting their fingers, but of too conservative a temper to set them down on the ground. The rain had caused a stoppage of labour, the cause of the preamble now progressing. Wit was prominent, rude perhaps as much in manner as in speech, the

Irish subtle and less boisterous, their strong brogue at times rendering them unintelligible, disqualifying their keen retorts in the ears of the English labourers. She could hear their short laughs. She raised her sash and listened.

Palethorpe, advancing from the village, now reached the group, and was roughly seized by the shoulder.

‘This is one, lads.’

‘Mind who ya’re seizin’ at this time o’ mornin’,’ cried Palethorpe, stentoriously; ‘dost know who thou’rt seizin’?’

‘Thou needn’t be so big, man. Ha’ they caught them two crazed men?’

‘I niver heerd a word.’

‘It’s reight. They’ve gotten away fra’ sylum, an’ reckon they lookin’ for har’s tin.’

‘There’s been a policeman up here astin’ if they been any such sarchin’ for work,’ said Towse.

‘If that’s it, I’m off and away,’ said Palethorpe.

‘Oh, not for thou. Bud we’re stopped,’ said Towse.

‘I knew it ’ud be weet as thack,’ said Palethorpe, ‘it tem down wi’ rain all neet; did thee hear it?’

‘Noa; I was ower harried to keep awake,’ returned Towse, ‘bud I mun be off.’

‘An’ I mun,’ said Palethorpe. ‘I want to do some odd jobs. One mun keep reight or I wodn’t ha’ come up.’

‘Maybe if thou’d as much money as some folks thou wodn’t ha’ bothered.’

‘Not I, Eli. They say them as is killed wi’ work goes to Treminster to be buried. I’m so fond o’ work I could go to sleep by it, bud not i’ a weet wheat-field. I’d niver rob no man of a day’s work if I wasn’t main forced. They make it out riches is sinful, and it says i’ th’ Testament roughish things o’ rich men, bud I think one’s a better chance o’ bein’ good when one’s well off. An’ ya don’t find folks wi’ plenty o’ money more anxiouser than poor folks, and they hadn’t



scar'd by what it says. Poverty aggravates one into bein' a rascal. Parson says o' Sundays we're main bad, 'cause there's no collections to speak on.'

'Them fellows,' said Towse witheringly, 'wi' five or six hundred a year consithers theirsens poor, or they'd niver stand in a pulpit telling poor folks they hug their money; they'd nobbut like to hug more on it.'

'Maybe,' said Palethorpe, who was a staunch Churchman, and contemptuous of Dissent; 'the more money one gits the worse off one feels.'

'I never hed that feeling, Paley, so I can't tell thee.'

'Oh, well, lad,' said Palethorpe, 'if one's to be strung up for breaking that last commandment, I broken it no end o' times. When I seen a young heifer i' full profit I ha' wished it was mine, nobbut. I've hung my liver efter fat pigs, an' wished I'd th' murdering on 'em. O, an' bless ye, a bit o' land

o' somebody else's I've felt as if it oughtn't to have gone beside me.'

'Heigh,' assented Towse, gravely shaking his head, 'them little commandments take a vast dele more keeping than them big 'uns, for all them little 'uns one can remember the best. No man but a nat'ral fool 'ud bow and scrape to a penny doll. One used to be able to read 'em up i' churches times by occasions, when one felt one's memory was goin', bud now they've got to print 'em in such print as no plain body can make out. It's high larnt folks that wants the suerest direction—us common folks must ast 'em if we want to know or remember what parson tells us. One mud be breaking 'em thruff ig'orance, now then !'

'Runnin' away wi' somebody else's wife or——'

'Nay, now, that's among the very littlest ; that one can't help but remember.'

'Or runnin' away wi' somebody else's dowter——'

‘I hardlins knaw whether that’s in, onywhere,’ said Towse, uncertain. ‘In consequence, if it isn’t there it couldn’t be a sin.’

‘No, certainly not,’ said Palethorpe.

Iphis put the window sash down gently. Run away with somebody’s daughter—was something in the air of her father’s annoyance? If things came to the worst, exiled to Snailhorn, even if placed under lock and key there—she knew what a determined man her father was—there were ways and means of communicating with a lover; trust a woman. She flattered herself that she was of the sex. Would Ephraim run away with her? Would he be bold enough? Iphis laughed to herself, to her own face in the looking-glass, as she brushed her hair a little smoother, and wiped the corners of her mouth with a towel coquettishly. She even admired her own lips; no one could deny their colour, their fulness and ripeness, and oh, coquette! she practised a pitiful, entreating look before the glass, and then a coaxing one, the tear not there, but she

felt when occasion required it could be there. But she would not run away while Ephraim's brother stayed.

She raised the window sharply and the breeze rushed promptly into her chamber.

'Towse—you can't start yet, can you?'

'No 'm, we can't that.'

'It's a bad job.'

But she was thinking it would baulk her of seeing Robert Sparrow in the harvest-field.

There was no enduring prospect of fine weather, but the sun gleamed out at breakfast time, and at noon the farmer decided that work should be resumed.

'If it's ower clatty,' said he, 'we mun drop it.'

The sailor suggested a beautiful moth returned to chrysalis or caterpillar. The metamorphose was disheartening. But to Iphis a little of his former glory hung about him. For one thing, he retained the open throat.

'I wonder you don't git cowl,' remarked she.

‘Use is second nature, Miss.’

She discovered her father’s trousers were too long for him. He had rolled them over a pair of Towse’s high-lows. They were ample too. He saw that her eyes were scrutinising his get-up.

‘They were full long and big, but that makes ’em cool and pleasant, more like my own.’

A touch of impatience overcame the farmer as he noted the complete understanding which seemed to have been arrived at between them.

‘Now, is the bessy going for to fancy this chap now?’

His greater impatience was perhaps that it looked like leading to ‘much talk, little work.’ If she did nothing herself, she ought to know better than hang about hindering when the weather was so treacherous. And he was not accustomed to seeing faults in what she did. To cure her of a megrim he would have paid a man to hang about doing nothing if he had a guarantee the man would not in turn become

presumptuous, and go beyond what he was paid for.

‘It’ll turn her mind fra the t’other,’ philosophised Cowlamb, as he pressed his spurless heel into the almost white nag as a signal for it to proceed.

‘It’s shameful how that lass does go on wi’ chaps,’ remarked Caroline.

‘Law, missis, what would ye? A lass has to give a look, or a chap dursn’t speak. They tell me ya was as gallas as onybody.’

‘Now, now, Palethorpe, thou niver come efter me.’

‘I was ower far gone wi’ somebody else. Law, one doesn’t allus wed the one one fancied best, but the one one gits turns out mostlins useful and needful to one.’

‘That’s true,’ said Caroline; ‘I niver meant heving my man. They used to ha’ picturs o’ folk cut out o’ black paper. He’d got one o’ them black things of a lass I did knaw, an’ I thowt she shouldn’t hev him. Law! I’d that thing put by years, an’ I used

to go look at it, I was nobbut a soft young thing. I gave it to one o' th' baens to play wi', an' he cut her head off her neck, an' so she was done wi'.'

'You women are allus so deead unto one another.'

'Sithee, she's making bands for Towse's sowjer.'

'Well done him.'

'But how about that blacksmith chap?'

''Tis all i' the famaly.'

Iphis set herself this task in a spirit of partisanship. She wished Robert to make a good show of work done. She could talk to him and help him as well, she only wished the straw was less damp. But Robert was quick and deft. A little raw at first he soon showed that he had not entirely forgotten a pursuit he had followed before sailing days.

Iphis habited herself to frequenting the field to watch her *protégé*, so that whenever her father asked what had become of her, his wife replied, desperately—



‘ She’s off to the wheat close.’

And the farmer screwed his eyelids in dull perplexity. He could not fail to notice how attentive the girl was to the fellow at the dinner-table, anticipating his wants, pouring into the guest’s glass even to the last drop of beer. That a certain anxiety began to show itself in his auxiliary’s countenance, hopelessness and tenderness, his eyes watching Iphis’s movements with some fondness, admiration—some confusion in her talk, her eyes falling. Ah, this was again a pretty piece of business! Cowlamb was now fully aware of the sailor’s relationship to Ephraim Sparrow, and had half repented himself of his generous impulses. The sailor was not such good company as at first ; he seemed too absorbed now to enter into any talk with him.

The wheat was all in stook, the oats were all cut, and the barley was fast becoming white, and the barley harvest was the most tickle. It should stand out, but a rain might depreciate it several shillings a quarter.

Robert's leave of absence was fast expiring. He had intended going home to spend his last few days with his father. Day by day he put it off until he had reached the last day but one of his leave. Iphis saw little of Ephraim, and those few occasions she met with him she treated him with provoking coolness. Ephraim retired each time with the conviction that his day was over and that he must abandon all hope. The first pang over, Ephraim's nature prevented such usage from cutting deeply—resignation was one of Ephraim's strong points. He saw that his brother was drifting into a strong passion; its apparent depth appalled him. Ephraim was quick enough to conceive that his brother was not of so elastic a temperament as he was. A fever of desire lurked in the elder brother's eye, there was worship in the little attentions he had for Iphis when they met, his voice was wistful and tender. Robert's polish caused Ephraim to feel himself more of a clown, more awkward and rude; and

although Robert's words were few and quiet, and well chosen, Ephraim knew it was intense passion that kept them calm and moderate. Ephraim felt himself unworthy before all this. It was only in Ephraim's presence the elder brother had qualms, feeling himself a supplanter, acting a Jacob's part. When conscience smote him he met it sadly. He would have to go away soon, and the field would remain for his younger brother, her first lover, and she would—— No! he did not wish to think that she would entirely forget him. He hoped that he would dwell in her memory and be remembered kindly. He was foolish; her goodwill from the first was owing to him being Eph's brother. Then he could not overlook the impression that of late there had been little communication or concord between the farmer's daughter and his brother. Why had he come at all?

‘When does he make a finish?’ asked the farmer.

‘To-morrow ; he’s going by the night train from Moortown to see his father,’ said Iphis with guilty knowledge.

‘They’re ordered to furren parts, Towse tells me,’ added Mrs. Cowlamb.

‘There’s likely to be feightin’ ; corn’ll get up,’ remarked the farmer with some satisfaction.

‘He hesn’t persuaded his brother to go?’ said Cowlamb, venturing on dangerous ground.

‘I don’t know,’ returned Iphis impatiently, off her guard, then turning away.

The farmer repented himself of his temerity. Shortly after Iphis left the house, a little disturbed. She had not treated Ephraim well. In despair he might enlist. According to gossip, he had no light time of it with his master. This and her treatment of him might make him feel restless, reckless. She had not failed to notice Ephraim looking downcast, despondent, without a struggle

giving up the field to his more favoured brother. He set too little store upon himself.

They were leading wheat that day. She wandered up to the stackyard, it must be confessed, a little aimlessly. To her surprise, Ephraim was there, seated on a huge draught horse, not astride of it, but as the plough lads sit. She could see that he had no stockings on, but whether that was because of poverty or a desire for comfort she was scarcely able to determine. Ephraim was spinning out his errand to its utmost, ignoring Farmer Cowlamb's prohibition, wishing to steal a few minutes to be near his brother. Robert was in a waggon throwing up sheaves, which Towse on one side of the stack deftly disposed, while another waggon on the other side was ministered to by Hosea and the sheaves taken by Palethorpe.

Robert's waggon was nearly empty; Ephraim, idly seated on the horse, was talking at his ease, while Robert's words were jerked out after every exertion.

None of them saw her at first, and she stood observing them interestedly. The fraternal affection of the brothers touched her. When the waggon was empty, Robert sat down at the tail ; then leaving his fork in the waggon, sprang to the ground. At the same moment Ephraim slipped off the horse, and Eli carrying gears on his head, advanced to the horse's tail, and adroitly threw them upon the animal's back.

‘Nobody would believe ya two was brothers,’ said Palethorpe, his waggon now emptied. With his fork in the stack he accomplished a clever sliding descent.

‘Whoo !’ grinned Eli to Ephraim, ‘thou looks like a slice chopped off o’ Bob.’ Then addressing the horse authoritatively, ‘Come hether a woy-ah. Tinker !—Gee !’

The sailor could not divest himself of the effects of discipline ; he stood erect, and his carriage was good, while Ephraim's locomotion was plunging and loose. Ephraim was quite ready to admit his inferiority, regarding

his taller brother with pride and affection. Long years had parted them. No envy was like to take its place in the breast of either.

‘Why doesn’t t’ ’list?’ asked Eli.

‘I wodn’t much mind,’ said Ephraim.

‘Nay,’ said Robert, ‘stop thy time now; thou can do that when thou art beat.’

‘Why should t’ ’list?’ asked Iphis, indignantly addressing Ephraim.

‘I’d knaw——’

‘Thou’d better stop an’ sarve thy time.’

But Ephraim would not meet her eyes.

‘I mun be off,’ said Ephraim awkwardly, ‘or my owd mowdy-warp ’ll be down unto me for bein’ a long while, an’ I no business here.’

‘Git into no scrapes, Ephraim,’ advised the prudent Towse.

‘Father thinks maybe there’ll be war,’ said Iphis with a measure of anxiety, following with Robert Swallow in the wake of the waggon. Though terrible to her, there was a glamour of the heroic. This young fellow



before her would likely enough take part in it.

‘Has he seen the paper?’

‘The *Mercury* had something about it.’

‘Well, lots of our men will be eager.’

‘And shall you?’

‘I can hardly say now. I don’t think I shall be so much as I have been.’

‘Why?’

‘Nay,’ Robert Sparrow shook his head with tender diffidence. ‘I might tell thee, if——’

‘No ifs,’ said she, with bewitching encouragement.

‘I hadn’t free. Is it true that there’s aught between Eph an’ thee?’

‘You can ask him that,’ she replied.

‘It’s true; thou doesn’t deny it.’

He appeared to think it would be as well not to explain himself. She was disappointed.

‘But if Ephraim fancied me, and I didn’t him——’

This was certainly reasonable. Men had made themselves foolish over women who would not hearken to them. Could he expect a modest girl to volunteer her preference? It was possible Ephraim had had no real place in her heart before he came. If he had caught her ear, she had listened out of sheer wilfulness and the spirit of coquettishness. A yellow-centred cornflower, the ox-eye daisy, she held in her hand; one by one the white petals were dismembered ruthlessly by remorseless fingers.

‘Thou only plays with a fellow,’ said he solemnly.

‘Nay, I don’t,’ denied she earnestly.

‘Are you sure of it?’

‘I’m sure I don’t.’

‘Thou’rt not playing with me?’ he asked with strong feeling, but with some doubt of her.

‘Not now.’

‘Well, then, I wish I could come and work here to be near thee. I’d work hard an’

try to better mysen for thee.' His voice was tremulous and entreating and full of the purest emotion. He had no rough modes of courtship, no violent seizure ; he was a suppliant and held himself apart, until voice or gesture showed him that which was faintly denied might be taken freely.

'Hasn't t' said as much to others afore me,' temporised she ; 'sowjers and sailors can git a fresh sweetheart wherever they go, they tell me.'

'Never—not,' he stammered, 'as I mean now.'

She laughed in a low tone. 'Oh, Robert, thou left a sweetheart where thy ship stopped, I'll be bound.'

He only shook his head disconsolately.

'I could buy myself off, maybe——'

He stopped and looked in her face appealingly ; he failed, though, to interpret her sphinx-like face.

'Thou couldn't do that just now, maybe,' said she, with a feeling of pity.

‘Maybe not—— But if thou doesn’t care for anybody else,’ he took her hand, ‘tell me, Iphis. I do love thee. I didn’t think I should, really ; but every day I been getting worse. If I stopped here much longer—— Well,’ said he, ‘’tis as well I am going, maybe. Thou doesn’t like to tell me ?’ He was anxious even to find her an excuse for her hesitation. ‘Isn’t that it ? Thou could easily draw thy hand away if it was so.’

He felt himself bound to ask her the question to quiet his conscience with regard to Ephraim. If it had been any one else, he felt that his wooing would have overlooked such an obstacle as a previous lover, one who still had pretensions. But it was his own brother. His heart sank, when he felt her hand stirring ; resistlessly he let it go.

‘I thought so——it’s Eph ?’

Iphis inclined her head. ‘But I like you ; but it is Ephraim, it is Ephraim !’ confessed she with some agitation and remorse.

They heard a horse’s feet behind them.

Both were roused out of their other world by the tangibilities of the world about them. It was Cowlamb riding up. He had been observing them for some minutes, walking his horse on the grassy hedge side. His reflections until the last moment or two were buoyant and comforting to himself.

‘Oh, well, we s’ll soon be out on *him*. He’s put t’other chap out on her heead, I’se think. Oh, well, if she begins agean wi’ him, off she packs to Snailhorn.’

But now close upon them he heard her say distinctly, ‘I like you; but it is Ephraim, it is Ephraim!’

‘She shall go to Snailhorn,’ muttered the farmer, savagely. A peculiar sound made with tongue and palate, and he was abreast of them.

‘Now, then,’ cried he, addressing the sailor, ‘shall you git thruff?’

‘I think we shall, sir,’ said Robert quietly. Yes, they would have all wheat in that

night, and harvesting, as far as he was concerned in it, would be over. If he had had longer leave of absence he could not have stayed another day now.

## CHAPTER 13.

## EXPATRIATION.

THE corn was all led, even the barley, and some of the wheat was thrashed, for Farmer Cowlamb had a weakness for being one of the first in the market with a sample of new wheat.

Sam's housekeeper was leaving him this very day. Iphis's boxes were packed and stood in the kitchen. She was going back to Snailhorn, to the home of her childhood. It would have had its measure of pleasure and delight for her but for the feeling that it was a genteel kind of transportation. Iphis appeared in the kitchen dressed for her journey. She passed through, scarcely deigning to look at any one.



‘Where art th’ going?’ asked her father, jealously.

‘To Towse’s, to bid the baens good-bye,’ vouchsafed she.

‘Don’t be long about it,’ cautioned he; then to his wife adding, with deep offence, though with a grim chuckle, ‘fine and rear and rank she is.’

Iphis hurried across the two fields. Her heart was somewhat heavy. Her mettle, too, was curbed and bitted down. She seemed to be bound down with an iron chain. She was going to live with Sam, keep his house, but it was on compulsion. She could leave a word behind with Mrs. Towse; it was not likely that Ephraim would be there. She had not seen him to speak to since his brother’s departure. She had seen him in the chapel, but Ephraim seemed to fight shy even of looking at her, and her father had insisted upon her vacating her seat among the singers to sit with him in their narrow pew.

She did not know that her father had

done his best to make Ephraim's place almost too hot to hold him. The blacksmith, not ignorant of Ephraim's escapade, was treating the lad with some consideration, if a little envy rankled with it; but a word from the farmer, intimating a change of smith if Ephraim Sparrow were sent on his place again, caused that worthy to return to and improve upon his old tyranny; curtness, grumbling, and grievance implied by looks and gestures more than words. The blacksmith gave the farmer to understand that he would curb the presuming Ephraim, and give him more work to take the folly out of him.

Happily, away from his hardships, Ephraim was blithe as any lark, looking forward to the day of his release. There was the faintest chance of Iphis meeting Ephraim at the garthman's. Already the Towses were aware of the proscription, but delicacy would have prevented them from mentioning it to Iphis. They rather held with the farmer,

that he was justified in the course he had adopted.

The Towse children and some of the neighbours' were at play on the house floor. Joel, a towel thrown over his head, and the other children around him, chanting a burthen in a dreary key—

Be he old or be he young,  
He hath not larnt his mother tongue.

‘Husht! husht! baens, you do make sich a noise,’ said Mrs. Towse, the moment she saw Iphis enter.

The silence was profound, and Joel, affected by it, though disappointed at the interruption of the rite of which he was the mystic, removed the towel from his head angrily.

‘Thou be goin’ to leave us, then?’ said Mrs. Towse.

‘I am, but not by my good will,’ declared Iphis; then softening a little, she said, ‘Sam was allus a good brother, but he isn’t what he used to be. I think you’re always mendin’ stockin’s when I come.’

‘ Allus fishin’ or mendin’ nets.’

‘ Have ye heard fra Robert, Mrs. Towse?’

‘ Well, Ephraim hes—he doesn’t know whether there’ll be war, bud they’re ordered off. It’s a good way off, but it’s not the Indies, it’s a harder name than that. I doubt we s’ll niver see Robert no more.’

Iphis looked so much distressed, Mrs. Towse felt concerned.

‘ I haven’t seen Ephraim to speak to him ; he fights shy of me, and I don’t know what I’ve done amiss to him. Has he said anything to you, Mrs. Towse ? ’

But Mrs. Towse shook her head, mentally determining to be neither pillar nor post. The first precept with Mrs. Towse was duty and obedience to parents.

‘ Oh, I see,’ said Iphis, with some temper, ‘ there’s nowt to be got out o’ you.’

‘ We moant git into no trouble,’ said Mrs. Towse, apologetically.

‘ I wish I had been a boy,’ said Iphis, with a forced laugh. ‘ I once teld father so

when I was little, and he said, "And I wish thou hed;" and then I said, "Then, why didn't ye christen me different?" He tells everybody that.'

'Well, it was a queer thing to say,' said Mrs. Towse, laughing. 'Fancy! An' are ye goin' to Snailhorn for good?'

'I expect so,' said Iphis, despondently. 'I once reckoned o' going, but I hate to think about it now. But I mun say good-bye, or I s'll have father here safe enow; we have to catch the two train. Joel, what shall I bring thee when I come back—a silver new nothing to pin on thy sleeve?'

'No,' replied Joel; 'I want a sword, and a gun, and a monkey.'

'Now, think o' that,' said Mrs. Towse, hands outspread, juvenile assurance and tenacity of memory thus exemplified in her own offspring. 'Once we bowt him one o' them monkeys on a stick, at Risby feast. He broke it first day, he did. He would make the monkey go clean over in a way he was

niver meant to, an' wi' lickin', the paint came off on to his face, an' a clean pinny. He was sitch an a sight as niver was seen. I thowt he'd forgotten all about it.'

'I ain't, though,' said Joel, proudly.

'Hush, hush ! mustn't be naughty, Joel.'

'I hadn't naughty,' declared Joel, in hurt surprise.

'No, I'm suer he isn't,' said Iphis, mercifully.

'Well, I moant bide no longer, Mrs. Towse, so good-bye. I shall come and see you when I come home, if it's nobbut for a day. Good-bye, Joel, and be a good boy,' advised Iphis, kissing Joel where his face was cleanest.

Mrs. Towse, watching Iphis hurry over the fields, sang to herself in low tones a song old as the hills, but which did not strike her as apposite—'Branglin' no more'—but then Mrs. Towse's wit, humour, and philosophy was like that of her neighbours, innocent of forcing, the spontaneous outcome of her mind.

Readiness of response, happiness of retort is native to illogical, untrained minds. Before Iphis was settled in the train, her father at her side, the wayward girl had passed out of the matron's mind.

It is a cleanly county; there are cleanly houses and cleanly people, clean streets in the small market towns, and well ordered sewers. But go on the railway, the cars are deplorably dirty; soap and soda is certainly not a strong point with directors!

A vignette of a farming acquaintance attracted Cowlamb's attention. He made for the compartment where this face beamed as complacently as the bull's head on the mustard tin.

'Come on, Iphis, we'll be in here.'

'What a dirty carriage!' said Iphis, ready to be disgusted with anything; 'but they're all alike—they always are dirty.'

'Here, sithee baen, sit o' this paper, they're not fit for women-kind,' said her father's acquaintance. Iphis was not in a



gracious mood ; she took the paper though, then met his eyes with a look akin almost to horror. What a fat man ! He smiled at her, and she felt ready to sink through the carriage floor. What a ponderous human being ! It was easy to see the complaisant fellow sat at a good table, although he must sit some distance from it, and no weak arm-chair to support his twenty stone odd. His hands were now clasped across his monstrous stomach. His features were not unpleasantly caricatured with wreaths of fat ; he seemed to have numberless chins. He loved good living, no doubt, and when he was out drank many threepenn'orths. He looked benignantly at Iphis, his bearing suggestive of thankfulness that he showed in his person abundant evidence of his prosperity and power to make any friends comfortable who might favour him with their company, that was, so far as eating and drinking and a free house went.

Iphis did not feel at all inclined to melt.

She sat staring disconsolately out of the window. She listened to her father and his friend talking—wheat, barley, oats ; oats, barley, wheat, but it interested her. Crops on either side came in for criticism.

‘Bad land—heeads badly filled—thin.’

‘Not so forrad about here as down wi’ us,’ from Farmer Cowlamb.

Transition from bad land to better effected by the puissant locomotive. But bad farming. Some one known to both coming in for censure and sarcasm.

‘A good farmer afore a kitchen fire, or in publics wi’ a glass afore him ; eh, Cowlamb ?’

Cowlamb nodded.

‘He can discourse there mightily o’ stock, an’ har’st, an’ hay gittin’, an’ how to keep fly off tonnops, but somehow he’s allus back’ard at rent-day. He’s hed ill luck i’ all his ventures.’

‘’Tis not to be wondered at that, seeing how he leaves all his business for other folks to transact, while he’s gadding about parish

business or some consarns o' other folkse,' said Farmer Cowlamb, cynically.

'I see, Cowlamb, thou knaws the man as well as me.'

'I good reason——'

Cowlamb's face, as an old writer puts it, was almost actionable; his fat friend regarded him gravely, then both nodded—one sourly, the other sympathetically.

'That's a different place,' said the fat farmer, pointing out of the window, 'to what it was when I was a lad. Law, I seen the owd man busy paring sods an' laying 'em on th' bank tops. The warren—blowing sand, short ling. That was the owd man's way o' keeping the bunnies within bounds.'

'And that was Squire Dick!' said Cowlamb.

'On Sunday he rid an owd galloway to Cuckoo-field, five mile away, wi' his owd bassoon, for he was that fond o' church music. That was his one delight.'

'And that son of his niver got married,

an' died, an' dowters still single—owd maids.'

'Scar'd for fear chaps should want 'em for their money,' said Cowlamb's friend.

'Better keep single than that,' said Cowlamb, looking significantly at Iphis, who tossed her head to herself.

'How queer things go! A man spends his life a scrattin' to be a money man, an' put forrad his baens; they don't allus fit into his notions.'

'No; that's true,' replied Cowlamb, fervently.

'Aye, a young lad's taken a farm i' our parish, rucks o' money there is th' famaly, an' nowts too hot nor too heavy for him. Dal it, they tell me he's a thousand pounds worse since he began. Now if he'd started poorish——'

'It ud ha' been th' making on him, maybe,' finished Cowlamb.

'Well, I s'll soon be home. I s'll git out directly. The train stops a bit. Will ye

git out and hev a threepenn'orth, Cow-lamb?'

'No, thank ye.'

'Well,' offering a fat hand, 'good-day. Good-day, my dear, I hope thou'll get a good husband. Heigh, oh, bless thee, all my lasses hev husbands, baens and all—all the sorts there is. Thou's the reight sort, I can see.' He stood outside talking. 'I knew thou had one lass beside them lads, but she's a woman.'

'He's a nice man, Mr. Hezlewood,' ventured Iphis, as soon as the farmer moved on.

'Nice enough, if he wasn't so fond o' threepenn'orths. I once saw a man change him a sovereign. "Now, thou'll come an' hev a threepenn'orth?" says Hezlewood. "Nay, there's no need o' that," says the man, "awiver I can't just now." A bit efter Hezlewood meets him. "Here you!" says Hezlewood, "come on, I owe tha a threepenn'orth, an' I hate being in debt."'

Iphis laughed.

‘I see nowt to laugh at,’ said her father, crabbedly, ‘throwing good money away. There was nine or ten more he was in debt wi’ somehow or other. Then, when another man wanted to treat back, Hezlewood says “Nay.” Awiver, the fellow got mad, an’ swore he’d niver ride in Hezlewood’s cart ony more if Hezlewood wouldn’t be treated. Law, what a while they do keep one at these pot-terin’ places.’

More often Cowlamb took train to Have-luck to get to Snailhorn, but this day Sam’s trap was to be at Glamford. When they reached the inn it had not yet been heard of. The farmer fumed, but there was nothing else but waiting. In the snug bar a party of jobbers were sitting returned from some fair. They were full of bounce and talk, compounded of simplicity and shrewdness. Clever in their calling, outside of it guileless of ordinary intelligence, of the constitution of people keeping more than an ordinary pace with the world. They saw Cowlamb enter, but none

of them seemed to know him. Although talking among themselves, they were not altogether unmindful of foreign ears catching the gist of their conversation; indeed they talked to be heard, rather flattered if they gained an interested ear. Happy recollections of fortunate days, old stories retold, as if to stimulate in the face of darker days. One would tell a story, the others simulate interest, for they had perhaps heard it over and over again, but their jesuitry was to entrap the stranger into attention and regard.

‘Just guess how many he bowt at Ragby fair?’

‘A thousand!’ with mock eagerness.

‘A thousand?’—a moment’s pause to excite surprise—‘six, and cleared 4*l.* a-piece at Sleepclose market—twenty-four thousand pound. Here, landlady, effer that we can drink another glass, it puts heart into one.’

‘I think we can,’ said Cowlamb, taking up his glass. Iphis was inclined to be indig-



nant, to think that her father should doubt the man. No doubt he was speaking the truth. Only Iphis knew her father so well—he was not a credulous man, he would not place implicit faith in such brag.

‘It’s true, sir,’ affirmed another; ‘he’s geven up jobbing an’ taken to farming.’

‘I didn’t dispute it, sir,’ said Cowlanb, drily.

Iphis noticed that they were shy of their experiences after this. To Iphis, jobbers bargaining was always an interesting scene. Leading the seller away from the throng, affectionately resting one hand upon a shoulder, the buyer indulges in much whispering and many gestures. At one moment one expects osculation imminent, at another there is such repulse that one believes the odd grimaces indicate scorn, contempt, and recourse to fisticuffs. But the arm falls pointlessly, the bargaining recommences, the pair of faces touch almost, some better understanding seems to prevail, they cast each

other off with sudden movement, the vendee's hand is outspread palm upward, and down with a smart shock comes the hand of the vendor.

A trap went past the window, a horse with a proud neck and fine action. It drew all to the window.

‘A fine animal,’ said one.

‘It’s Sam’s,’ whispered the farmer to his daughter—then to the landlady in an undertone, ‘tell the chap he needn’t lowse out; ast him if he’ll hev a pint o’ beer. We’ll go in a minute, Iphis; I’ll just finish my glass.’

‘I like a good topped hoss,’ said the jobber, again.

‘Aye, thou ought to know a good hoss when thou sees one; thou’s done a bit o’ hoss coupin’ i’ thy time.’

‘I hev, but I was once at Herecastle and there was a fellow, every time I spoke about a hoss, kep’ puttin’ it down in a book. I’d been up (before the magistrates) the week afore. I thowt he was curus about me and

was set on to watch me, so says I, "I hope you're puttin' it down correct." Says he, "I hope so." So I says to him, "Maybe you want to know who I be; I'll tell you straight. I'm Jack Moody, the reprobate hoss dealer o' Haveluck." I heerd no more on it.'

'It sattled him, I'll uphold it,' said the landlord, who had come in. 'I went to a horse-breaker when I was a lad, and my father said to me, "Make up thy mind, lad, for I do think a horseman that dies worth his saddle and bridle he's not a bad fellow." I offen thowt o' what he said, oftenest when I was mounted i' th' stable. I ridden a hoss in a dark stable for weeks, we dursn't let 'em see daylight—when we browt 'em out they'd blinkers on. Romping six-year-owds, thoroughbreds nobody liked fettling. One cowl morning I thowt I'd go to a bit o' plain sarvice; my finger ends was frozen nearly, an' I hed to howd my hoss that tight, buck as he would when he'd th' least chanch, and I see th' owd tailor come out and rub his goose on

the door mat; thinks I, he's a better job nor me, so onehow or other I got a trade.'

'Iphis, we'll be going,' said Cowlamb. 'Good-day to ye.'

'Good-day, sir,' said the landlord, obsequiously.

'Who *is* that?' asked the jobbers.

'Why, don't ye know? Why, Cowlamb.'

'I thowt I'd seen him afore,' said the story-teller, scarcely recovered from his discomfiture; 'he's a clever farmer, I hear.'

'Them two sons o' his are turning out queer,' said another; 'they tell me when Sam Cowlamb comes here or goes to Haveluck or Treminster market there's no telling when he'll git by again.'

'He's parted from his wife, isn't he?'

'The owd man looks sour. He's a good dele put on.'

Iphis saw all the faces at the window. She knew instinctively that the party inside were canvassing them. Having her father's

nature, she met the quizzical eyes crossly and defiantly. She could not hear the broad laugh that went round after one of them said—

‘That’s his lass, an’ a chip o’ th’ owd block. That sour look ’s the owd man up an’ down.’

The town was a pleasant one, more picturesque than Moortown. It was a beautiful country around it. The road passed through a rich area, old pasture, gentle slopes, and lush hollows, the wool of the sheep yellow, the red beasts sleek and ‘solider’ than those about Willowby. Copses of young slim trees, broad hedgerows, with ancient oaks and elms, skirted the road for miles, wide strips of green on either side, the villagers’ cows grazing, and a lad ‘tentin’ them.

‘A good road,’ said Cowlamb. ‘I tell our overseers they ought to come an’ look at the roads about here. They use gravel, not that soft clay or limestone. The first frost, if it isn’t sharp enough to bear a duck

on a dyke, it's all splish-sposh, like soft mortar.'

'There is some fine trees an' all,' said Iphis, won over with the beautiful *entourage*.

'A'most too many on 'em,' said her father, critically.

'There's a few trees about our lane, else they're all stubbly thorns i' th' hedgerows.'

'They look nice when they're white ower wi' May, or red wi' cat-haws.'

'Not so pritty as them hoss-chesnuds when they're i' flower.'

'They're good to nowt, not much more vally than thorn i' the wood, an' not half so useful to a farmer.'

'Is iverything forced to be useful?' questioned Iphis.

'Thou'rt i' thy tantrums, to be suer,' said Cowlamb, impatiently; 'thou knaws as well as I do what ee mean.'

Iphis relapsed into silence again. She brightened when the great white house came

in sight. She was born there; her soul was not yet dead. The thick stone walls and sturdy comfort were much more preferable to the lath-and-plaster grace of the Willowby farmhouse. Its multitudinous windows gleamed in the sun; the ivy that here and there ran up to the eaves, a distinct feature in the building. How dear to her was every antiquated piece of stone-work, the curious old kitchen-door frame that might have come out of an abbot's refectory! How oddly the modern register grates accorded with massive stone mouldings and chamfers of the old open ranges! and the window-sills were as large as cottagers' tables.

Sam was in the yard. He came up like a dutiful son and shook hands with his father and kissed Iphis. Iphis found herself admiring Sam's dutifulness and filial respect. He looked to her father, she thought, apologetically, as if he were sorry for his faults and would do better in the future. She was almost sore because her father would show



himself so curt and unsympathetic. Sam followed at his father's heels like a prodigal son returned to an obdurate father. Cowlamb would certainly have sent his prodigal to the swine until his heat was over.

How homelike everything seemed to her ! It was like coming back home. Her heart seemed to warm within her and her brain to quicken. Her eyes glistened at the pale bright blue on the staircase wall. The flock paper on the dining-room wall—hideous to present æsthetes—had not been changed, although Sam, the last time she was there, had declared he was tired of it. Iphis had said that she should be sorry to come and find another in its place. Had Sam retained the room in its old guise, heeding her ? Iphis was inclined to believe so. The girl brought in a kettle and placed it on the trivet. Iphis noted that Sam had a liking for comfort, and did not keep best rooms merely to look at and to entertain company in. No ; Sam's wife had had high notions, as Farmer Cowlamb

said. She had acquiesced in breakfasting in the great kitchen, on condition that the other meals of the day be had in the dining-room. But Cowlamb would never have found fault with his son for living in good style, however he might deprecate Sam's 'uppishness' at home. Whenever he went to Snailhorn he settled down comfortably in the easiest of Sam's leather-covered arm-chairs, his slippered feet stretched out at leg's length on the rug.

Sam was open and frank with his father, and Cowlamb forebore pressing upon past slips. While Iphis was in the kitchen cutting bread into writing-paper slices, the farmer was acquainting Sam of Iphis's alarming proclivities. He had a fine opportunity, for Iphis must have a scour round, opening closet and cupboard drawers, asking numberless questions of the stout lass who was there ready to wait on the young mistress hand and foot, with no laggard will. The fireplace was under a beam, a chair stood under at each

side. Iphis could recall the picture of her father and mother sitting there.

‘If it was a fellow,’ said Cowlamb, ‘that was owt at all, one might be glad. But a blacksmith’s lad, a ne’er-do-weel, and but a bit bigger than his tongs! Now there was a brother, a sailor, as come; he was a fineish chap. I thowt between ’em it would all slip to the ground. I thowt so till I heerd wi’ my awn ears—bud she’ll be out o’ the road on him here, out o’ harm’s way.’

‘Oh, she’ll be safe enough here,’ said Sam, encouragingly.

After tea, naturally, the farmer and his son went out to look through the stackyard, the stables, and over contiguous fields. During their absence Iphis found time to explore the bedrooms, examine carpets, beds—paying particular attention to pillows—looking under them to see if there was any accumulation of flue. The window curtains did not escape her; her fingers ran along the edges of furniture to test whether dust pre-

vailed. Iphis came to the conclusion that there was little to find fault with. For a day or two the girl had been left to her own devices, and Iphis held with her mother that servants were a necessary abomination, instituted to be sharply looked after.

She found something to occupy her in the kitchen. The evening shadows crept on, and she heard Sam and her father enter the house.

‘She’s hed a regular hunt,’ said Cowlamb shrewdly to his son. ‘What’s she efter now?’

‘Nay,’ laughed Sam, ‘she’s found something not point ’vice maybe.’

Iphis coming into the room a little after this was witness to a little jar. Father and son seemed to have forgotten past recrimination, shyness and distance. An unlucky move of Sam’s disturbed the harmony. He went to the sideboard to fetch decanters and glasses, and Cowlamb fired up.

‘Thou needn’t—no, that’s it; oh, deary

me,' here Cowlamb groaned, 'I can do wi'out at home, I can do beout here.'

Iphis's heart leaped into her mouth almost. She felt paralysed with a cold dread.

Sam returned from the sideboard crest-fallen, and without a word of rejoinder. He went to the chimney-piece, and his fingers absently abstracted some letters from a rack, which he eyed one after the other and then placed them back again, conscious of his father's eyes fixed upon him basilisk-like. Eventually he took a chair, leaned back, then restlessly inclined forward, but all the time reading his father's uncompromising face furtively. Iphis sat away from both, and she was also watching Sam; her eyes had a frightened dread in them. Her father—had he told at home the worst of Sam's craving?

She was glad, indeed, when her father said, without any temper—

'Well, my lass, where's a light. I'm off up the wooden hill.'

Iphis wondered if Sam would stay behind

and help himself to the liquor. But Sam's moral boyish awe of his father was not yet extinct. Sam was master here at Snailhorn, but the king still lived, and he made his voice heard in subtle fashion. Sam cheerfully took the hint, and both father and daughter heard his bedroom door close with some satisfaction. Iphis lay awake thinking for a time, then recollecting that her father would have to be stirring early, she composed herself for sleep.

She was down early, solicitous; a good breakfast will soften a misogynist. There were few of her father's weak points she did not know. Did this solicitude soften him towards her? But no; he did dearly love her, he was parting from her, and there was some difference between them. He was tender with her before going.

'Now, Iphis,' said he, touchingly, 'if thou'd only do as I wish thee, thou'd niver ha' cause to rue. The day afore I come here I sattled for that little farm beyond ours. I bowt it, an' I mean it for thou. Then, whither

t' gits husband or no, thou'll ha' no fear when I'm gone.'

Her heart beat fast. She could not help being touched with such love and forethought. But then, could even such a bait reconcile her to the life of an old maid? Woman fulfils not her mission in the world unless she marries. All she could say was, 'Thank you, father,' and kiss him.

But when Sam and his father were about parting, Cowlamb retained his son's hand a moment.

'I believe, Sam, thou likes that lass. Now, be good to her.' It was earnest entreaty.

'I will,' said Sam reassuringly, brightening as he fully comprehended his father's meaning.

'Well, sithee,' said Cowlamb, desperately faithless if hoping for the best, 'if I hear talk o' thou frightening her wi' ony o' thy antics I'll hev her back soon. Now, mind.'

Sam felt himself very much like a bad boy, but, with wonderful grace, bore the lash.



‘ You’re hard on me, father, if you think that o’ me—wi’ her.’

Cowlamb had no time for reply. Trains do not wait for happy terminations to periods.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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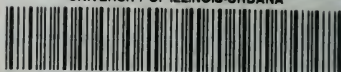








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